

# Pathways to Quality



## **THE Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project** **American Institutes for Research**

*in collaboration with the following institutions*

**Juárez and Associates, Inc.**

**Academy for Educational Development**

**Education Development Center, Inc.**

**University of Pittsburgh**

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U.S. Agency for International Development  
Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade  
Human Capacity Development

**March 2002**



# *Dedication*

**This Case Study Anthology is dedicated  
*to the learners*  
who are the intended beneficiaries  
of national education reform  
and to the memory  
of the IEQ team members  
who are now deceased:**

*Rossina Bolaños*

*Joseph Carasco*

*Raul Gomez*

*Christina Iglesias*

*Steven Maliakini*

*Modesta Omona*

*and*

*Joseph Yakubu*





# FOREWORD

***The federal role in education is not to serve the system, but to serve the children.<sup>1</sup>***

As part of the Global Alliance to achieve Education for All, USAID has provided international leadership for more than a decade to align the two critical targets of universal access to education and improving education quality. During the 1980s, USAID funded the Improving Efficiency of Education Systems (IEES) project, pioneering a methodology of sector analysis and sector strategic planning that is supported by education management information systems. In 1990, USAID again broke new ground with the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project, which launched a systematic effort to address the quality of teaching and learning within the context of increased access to learning opportunities. From the outset, the IEQ project focused on:

- Measuring teacher performance and student learning, and examining their relationship
- Housing IEQ projects within national institutions or agencies
- Supporting local researchers and educators to design and implement classroom-anchored research on national priorities
- Using the findings as the basis for dialogue about how to direct policy toward program improvements
- Integrating a continuous improvement cycle into national education systems

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<sup>1</sup> President George W. Bush. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. January 2001.

The relationship between access and quality is complex: Without a quality focus, national systems lose the capacity to attract and hold students and enrollments decline as dropouts increase. Improving quality means that progress in meeting or exceeding appropriate standards must be measured. Standards emerge from agreed-upon learning objectives in specified knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Nations throughout the world struggle to establish widely understood and accepted learning standards. This process widens the participation among members of the civil society and increases accountability for results. IEQ has played a critical role in some 20 countries over the past decade in developing this awareness and providing technical skills within countries to focus on children's learning, using innovative methods of assessment to gain new insights into the classroom process and outcomes.

The transformation in global awareness to recognize the critical importance of basic education began with Jomtien in 1990 and continues to this day through the Education for All (EFA) global initiatives. Within the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 focuses attention on establishing standards for children's learning, holding schools and school systems responsible for ensuring that all children learn to read. The argument that all children must have the opportunity to learn is won. The current imperative is to ensure that the quality of education enables children to use the knowledge and skills they learn as stepping stones for full participation in society.

The stories here, as told by national educators and presented in *Pathways to Quality*, describe how countries applied the IEQ cycle of improvement — how they selected and examined a national issue and how such examination revealed specific opportunities for improving the quality of education and student learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Donald R. Mackenzie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "D" and "M".

**Donald R. Mackenzie**  
**Acting Deputy Director**  
**USAID/EGAT/HCD**

***March 2002***

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# Introduction

## The IEQ Cycle to Improve Teaching and Learning

**by Jane Schubert  
Director**

**Improving Educational Quality (IEQII) Project**



*Knowledge of the universe would somehow be ...  
defective were no practical results to follow.<sup>1</sup>*

**E**mphasizing practical results, the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) project sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for more than 10 years has led international efforts to conduct classroom-based research activity. The work has been accomplished on behalf of developing countries across Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, and Eurasia, by *local teams working in their countries*. Employing a collaborative, continuous, and systematic process, IEQ both informs policy choices and guides the design of intervention programs.

The case studies summarized in this anthology describe how the IEQ process works to help teams design, conduct, and communicate research from local settings in ways that support informed decisions about educational improvement. Like the IEQ research projects, this anthology seeks to provide stepping stones for integrating the process into international education systems, as nongovernmental organizations and in-country institutions collaborate to define and measure quality and to translate empirical research findings into action.

A long-term investment of USAID's Global Bureau, IEQ has come of age in the past decade during two five-year contracts. The decade opened with the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand articulating an international consensus that education is the single-most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth.<sup>2</sup> Prompted by the Jomtien conference, basic education has since become a priority for developing nations – and school enrollment has dramatically increased. The total number of pupils

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<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *De senectute*, 21, tr. William Armstead Falconer, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> *The State of the World's Children*, 1999, UNICEF.

in primary schools alone rose from an estimated 500 million in 1975 to more than 680 million in 1998 – and is projected to reach 700 million by 2005. At the same time, the Jomtien Conference at the start of the decade and the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal at the end of it have identified many considerable obstacles on the road to education reform in economically developing countries. More than 100 million children are still out of school – and 60 percent of these are girls. Moreover, four major challenges remain unresolved: funding the global initiative of Education for All; assessing and funding national plans of action to achieve it; monitoring the progress that nations make, which requires significant local monitoring capacity; and increasing the cooperation needed within countries to implement needed reforms.<sup>3</sup>

### CHALLENGES CONFRONTING EDUCATION REFORM

In the decade since Jomtien called on basic education to focus on “actual learning acquisition and outcome rather than exclusively upon enrollment,” the concept of Education for All has opened the doors of learning to all school age children and has been reinforced by UNICEF’s declaration that education is a basic, non-negotiable human right.<sup>4</sup> Emphasizing the rights to survival, protection, development, and participation, the international movement has called for learning that strengthens the capacity of children to act progressively on their own behalf.

*Education has shifted in the hearts and minds of parents from a privilege of others to a right available for their children, too*

One by one, national leaders have proclaimed universal access to, and the quality of, basic education as a national priority. Education has shifted in the hearts and minds of parents from a privilege of others to a right available for their children, too. As a result of this reorientation, the doors are “open” and boys and girls of many ages are arriving to claim their rightful place in the classroom.

Inspired by this admirable political shift, but often proceeding without necessary resources, education systems have taken a deep breath in their struggle to respond to swollen school populations and the

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<sup>3</sup> *Monitoring Report on Education for All, 2001*, UNESCO.

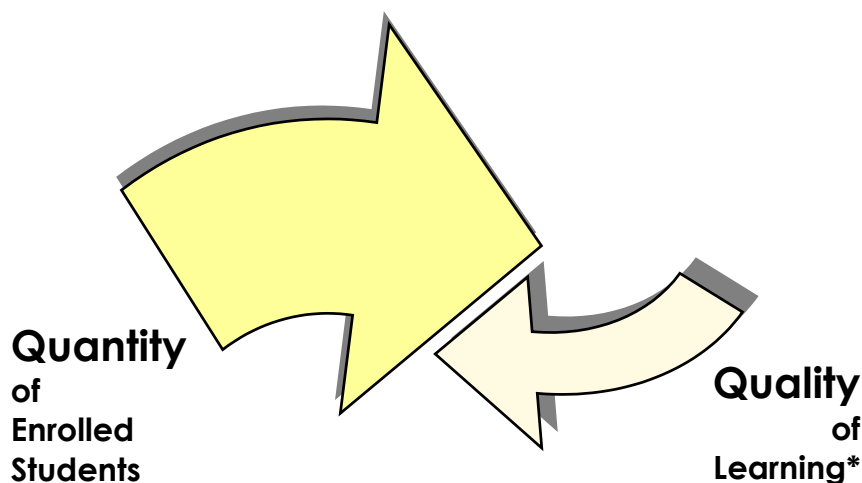
<sup>4</sup> *World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, 1990*, UNESCO.

burgeoning needs for learning materials, trained teachers, classroom space, feeding programs and other inputs. Donor collaboration with countries intensified in the years after Jomtien and countries strove to support improvements in system efficiency, strengthen national and regional infrastructures, coordinate more local involvement, and reduce the wasted potential caused by high dropout rates and class repetition. Multilateral and bilateral relationships guided national educational reform efforts toward a range of priorities such as professional development for teachers at the pre- and in-service levels, improved end-of-cycle and continuous assessments, revised curriculum materials, management courses for district and regional educators, increased textbook production, and more monitoring and evaluation.

*The ideal of quality is being overpowered by the reality of sheer numbers*

Notwithstanding the recent attention, the implementation of national policies promoting access has fallen far short of meeting needs and expectations for improved teaching and learning. Figure 1 illustrates the clash between the *quantity* of education – the ideal of universal access – and *quality*, such as measurable improvement in pupil performance and teacher knowledge and skills. The ideal is being overpowered by the reality of sheer numbers.

Figure 1: **The Inherent Conflict in Reform**



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\*Jane Schubert. "Improving Educational Quality: Some Unsettled Issues," CIES 2000 Conference San Antonio, TX. March 8 -11, 2000.

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*Educational  
quality and  
quantity need  
to be aligned;  
there is a  
critical need  
to identify  
policies and  
interventions*

While the dual pursuits of educational and political agendas certainly create tension, nonetheless there is a common goal: successful learning and completion of a primary school curriculum, either through a school or an alternative learning environment. Quantity reflects the need to have pupils enter and move through the system, while quality addresses what pupils know and can do and how they can use their education. If the two forces are to be aligned, however, a systematic, ongoing examination of the learning environment is required. There is a critical need to pinpoint opportunities for both policies and interventions.

## **THE IEQ PROCESS**

The IEQ process provides a framework for helping education systems respond to the demands of universal access while maintaining a focus on quality. The balance is achieved by strengthening the host country's capacity to systematically examine local conditions of teaching and learning – and to use the resulting knowledge as a basis for reforming national policy and local practice. IEQ can be viewed both as a process and an outcome – a process because it examines what happens in learning environments and an outcome because it produces the evidence to support change.

### *Defining Quality Education*

A commonly asked question is: How does IEQ define quality? In 1993, the program developed a working definition of educational quality to stimulate dialogue about quality in each country, pointing to the essential elements of student progress toward meeting or exceeding locally appropriate standards (expressed in measurable outcomes such as academic achievement at the basic education level, reflecting minimum standards of numeracy, oral expression and literacy); conditions of learning environments; and instructional strategies and resources that strive to treat all students equally so that learning is not hindered because of characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic status, geography or ethnicity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jane Schubert. "Defining Educational Quality: An IEQ Framework." January 1993.

The IEQ approach rests upon the context as a guide to articulating quality in a particular country, and therefore local conditions and needs become the focus of the country-based research. One of the special characteristics of IEQ is the absence of a project imported to a partner country. The selection of issues to be addressed, the research design, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis and reporting plans all grow out of dialog among IEQ core staff and host country research team members – a collaborative partnership. This is a new experience for all, leading to lively debates about the meaning of quality, studied choices based on the potential value and utility of research anchored in the schools and classrooms, and appreciation for the recommended methodological approaches – and inevitable constraints – associated with qualitative and quantitative information.

Within this perspective on “defining quality,” each country team selects a major national reform as the basis for its investigation. The team then conducts an in-depth examination at the classroom level to illuminate how the reform is being implemented and to build a base of useful knowledge about the factors that contribute to or impede improved teaching and learning. Once these factors are spelled out, they are discussed by stakeholders at every level of the education system as well as by others in NGOs, private businesses, and communities, etc.

Hiding findings in research reports is self-defeating; the utilization of research knowledge in practical ways is a measure of its value. Thus, no aspect of the work of IEQ teams is more important than sharing information and discussing the options for its use. Each team activity embraces dialog across hierarchical lines, in which colleagues with similar roles and responsibilities are engaged along with stakeholders who are outside the education system but nonetheless concerned with national development.

From the IEQ standpoint, educational quality is not a final destination. Instead, it is a never-ending journey for policymakers who must understand what is driving and dampening school and classroom performance. With continuously expanding knowledge gleaned from classroom-based research as their guide, policymakers are in a position to take responsible actions.

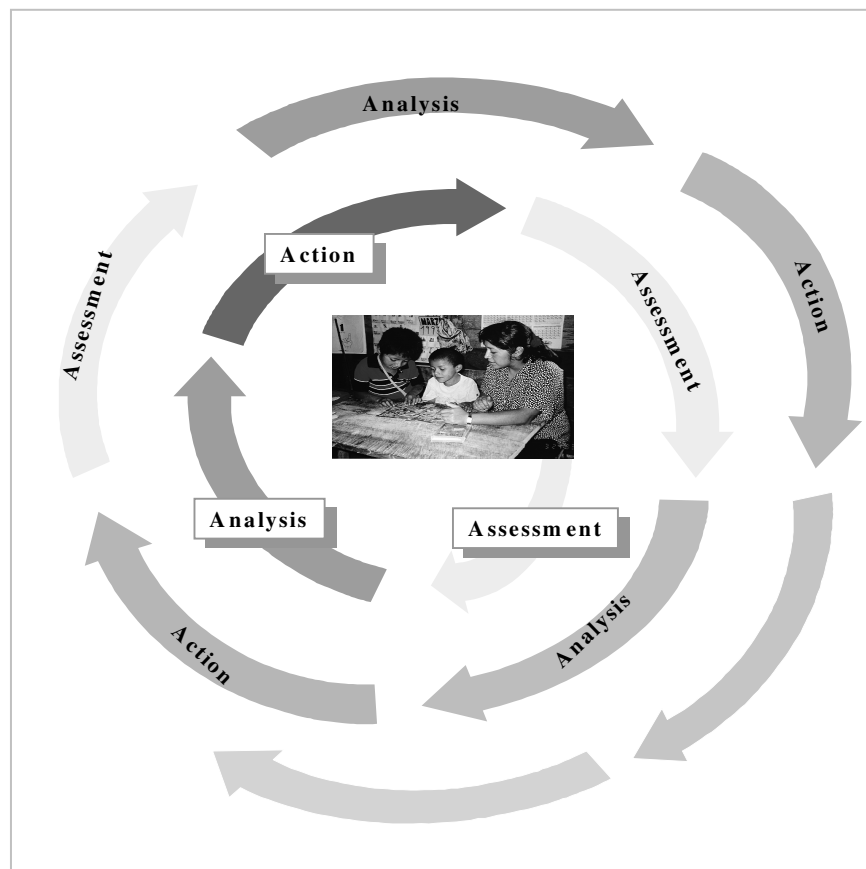
*The IEQ approach rests upon the context as a guide to articulating quality in a particular country*

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### *The Cycle of Improvement*

Assessment is the IEQ entry point. It is intrinsic to the IEQ process – viewed and used as empowering and as a basis for improving learning rather than for documenting deficits. As a way of determining the extent to which specific reform strategies or interventions are reaching the goals of improving teaching and learning, assessment is integrated into the IEQ process from the beginning and applied throughout. Feedback mechanisms then stimulate dialog and reveal options for incrementally improving teaching and learning. Figure 2 illustrates the overall IEQ cycle, in which assessment leads to analysis of the data, which, in turn, permits informed deliberations and decisions about action steps that are supported by the findings. IEQ begins and ends in the classroom.

Figure 2: **The Cycle of Improvement**



- **Assessment** of teaching and learning necessitates a variety of measures to capture diverse perspectives on the school experience and outcomes. Academic achievement may be measured in many ways, such as by criterion-referenced exams and curriculum-based assessments, but enrichment of the knowledge about the quantitative information produced through such measures occurs when one systematically observes the teaching and learning in action – e.g., how are learning resources being used; are pupils working in small groups; is there discussion or interaction between the pupils and/or between pupils and the teacher? Interviews with district, regional and local educators reveal the roles and responsibilities of these officials, along with the credentials they bring to their profession.
  
- **Analysis** combines both quantitative procedures (developing and managing large-scale data bases) and qualitative procedures (methods of analyzing open-ended responses or developing classifications from observations) so that the meaning of one is enriched with the other. For example, if pupils' reading scores are low, then the observation that pupils have very little material to read pinpoints opportunities for intervention and correction. Professional development seminars on qualitative methods, data analysis, and presentation of findings occur in each participating country. Under no circumstances do international partners arrive in a partner country to DO the work. Often, an initial analysis may raise issues that require further exploration. For example, in a situation where there was no assurance that a textbook moved from a district administrator to the local school and then to a pupil's home, investigation raised the question, What happens to the *textbooks*?
  
- **Action** based on the findings is one measure of IEQ success. Practical use occurs in two key ways: the first is by sharing the information so as to permit reflection, dialogue and options based on the implications of the findings. Knowledge therefore moves throughout the system as the perspectives obtained from the research are shared with a variety of people within the system. The traditional methods of disseminating research for users to consume at leisure are

*Dialog is an inclusive process, taking place across hierarchical lines*

fractured as researchers assume responsibility for sharing the knowledge gained in arenas (e.g. national seminars, workshops, briefings) where questions may be asked and potential actions may be debated. Sometimes, one action is to probe more deeply into the research/quality issues, as when 50 percent of teachers moved from their original assignments within six months. This caused researchers to return to the schools to learn, “What happened to the teachers?” A second action leading to practical use of data involves applying the new knowledge to improve a program practice or to reevaluate and issue new policy. The finding that teachers refuse to release textbooks to pupils because the teachers are held accountable for damage or loss of textbooks, for example, produced a change in policy that removed responsibility from the teacher.

*Sustainable improvements do not follow from piecemeal actions; IEQ teams consider many interrelated options*

#### **THE CLASSROOM: ENTRY POINT TO QUALITY**

It is important to keep in mind that every classroom setting has its own potential points of entry for those who would intervene in the interest of improving quality. For example, if observations reveal that teachers do not know subject matter content, an intervention to strengthen that knowledge must be considered, not only for the targeted teachers, but as a change embedded within the entire training system. Recognizing that sustainable improvements do not follow from piecemeal actions, IEQ teams and policymakers need to consider many the interrelated options for intervention, including:

- **professional development programs** to upgrade teachers’ skills (e.g. student-centered learning) and knowledge about the content they must teach;
- **community investment** to build a new classroom block with bricks made by the parents, so as to move classes out of the open space covered by a thatched roof held by four poles;
- **government policies** that require and provide textbooks for almost every pupil;
- **measurement** of incremental learning by individual pupils (e.g. curriculum-based assessment) as a supplement to end-of-cycle high stakes testing;
- **parental support** for learning, including the provision of meals at school and time for study at home;



- **focused attention** on quality by national educators enlightened with stories and empirical evidence about situations such as those described above; and
- **demonstrated linkages** between locally based research and knowledge about quality issues.

## A Classroom Observation in Malawi

Efforts to define quality and plan long-term systemic improvements can be informed by documentation of what takes place between teacher and pupil:

An IEQ  
Snapshot

*The teacher has just demonstrated two long division problems. She puts three more on the board, but they are difficult to understand because the chalkboard surface is very worn. The pupils are instructed to copy the three problems in their exercise books and then copy what they have seen. The plastic bags that contain the exercise books are being used by many pupils as mats on the dirt floor, so there is some scrambling to locate and open the bags. Others already have been using their books. The teacher allows a few minutes for the pupils to complete their assignment before trying to move about the classroom to check their work. It is very difficult because the pupils are squeezed together on the floor. As hands fly into the air, waving their books, the teacher examines each one and makes a mark on the page before returning it silently to the pupil. There is no time for all the hands to be answered. The teacher returns to the front of the room and asks three pupils to complete the assignment on the board. The Standard 3 mathematics class is ended and the teacher moves to the stool in the corner of the room where her books rest, to find her guide for the next subject.*

*A crucial feature of the IEQ process is that it rejects imported or force-fit solutions*

## **PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THE IEQ PROCESS**

A crucial feature of the IEQ process is that it rejects imported or force-fit solutions. Instead, it places emphasis on building the local capacity to design, conduct and apply research. The focus of the research is the school and classroom. With local designation of issues – and definition of quality – as its hallmarks, the IEQ process represents a marked shift from traditional technical assistance to a collaborative process enlivened by the relationships between members based in the U.S. and national team members and reflecting a variety of perspectives in host countries. It also introduces a new way of examining and thinking about national reform efforts, based on the following core principles:

- **The PRIORITIES articulated in the research design – and indeed, the classroom-anchored research that emerges – must reflect some aspect of a national reform in each country.** This context includes how learning takes place, the coverage of assessment, and the physical environment of the learning experiences and the level and types of support provided by the community. Examples of IEQ classroom-anchored research include: the implementation process and the learning outcomes of a middle-school integrated curriculum for out-of-school learners delivered by audio instruction in Honduras; an exploration of how the national policy requiring primary school teachers in Ghana to use local language as the medium of instruction is actually being implemented; and the design and evaluation of a professional development program for Teacher Training College tutors who are now required to prepare students to teach an integrated primary school curriculum in Jamaica.
- **PUPILS are intended to be the ultimate beneficiaries – not the victims – of legislative frameworks, national reform efforts, administrative schemes and a host of pilot projects.** Do these efforts have the desired effect of enhancing learning – of promoting knowledge, skills and attitudes that are valued by the local community and that contribute to civil society AND result in the successful completion of primary school? Who knows – and how is this knowledge measured? The IEQ activities address these issues by assessing: instructional practice and teacher content knowledge; a

pupil's academic achievement and learning experience; and the physical environment in which learning occurs inside and outside the school. All efforts in the educational enterprise should reach the pupil in some form of improved quality of education.

- **Inclusive PARTNERSHIPS engage and maximize the capabilities of participating educators and researchers within the host country.** The IEQ team typically draws upon a host institution's researchers, many of whom received advanced degrees in Europe and/or North America. The purpose of housing IEQ within a national institution is not only to strengthen the technical skills and experience of the staff members but to create visibility and sustainability for the institutions as country-based resources equipped to support national reform efforts through locally-based research. In some instances, IEQ forges new relationships in-country as people who are accustomed to working as individual researchers join other teams (e.g., university researchers working in teams with other institutions; non-researchers such as local teachers involved in the data collection and dialog of findings; researchers actively engaged in forging mechanisms for sharing findings with potential users). Being a partner ideally means that each team member recognizes and values reciprocity throughout the team. Indeed, every team member brings technical and/or cultural knowledge to the discussions around the design and implementation of the IEQ activity. Examples of partner institutions include, for Guatemala, the Ministry of Bilingual Education (DIGEBI); for Ghana, the University of Cape Coast, the College of Education at Winneba and the University of Ghana Institute of African Studies at Legon; and for Malawi, the Malawi Institute of Education & Save the Children/US – Malawi Field Office in Mangochi.

The core value of IEQ is that activities are carried out locally by country nationals, with international consultants providing support in such ways as conveying new methods (particularly qualitative); participating in workshops on analyses; and helping to present findings in actionable, user-friendly forms. Because IEQ works in a cycle rather than along a linear path, actions based on the findings are reevaluated in each new cycle. Research findings are integrated into country-based activities as local educators and researchers apply new findings to

*The core value of IEQ is that activities are carried out locally by country nationals, with international consultants providing support*

programs being implemented at the local level and use the results to inform dialog at the national, regional and local levels through a variety of mechanisms.

Knowledge about the reality of teachers' and pupils' experiences and the environment of schools and classrooms forms the basis for dialog about reforms in policy and practice. For it is at the local level where the action takes place – and where the changes intended by policies take effect. Those who create legislative and regulatory frameworks to guide changes usually are not exposed to the learning environments where those frameworks are to be implemented. If policymakers were able to enter the classroom and have the experience of learners and teachers, how might their debates and decisions about quality also be transformed?

In response to this question, the type of research supported by IEQ – and the use of the information in practice – attempts to close the distance between policymakers and others by bringing them into the classroom. This is accomplished by presenting the findings in realistic and concrete terms that depict learning experiences. The IEQ core framework is flexible, accommodating the changes that invariably occur within national political systems (as well as USAID) as newly elected and appointed officials respond to challenges in new ways with adjusted policies and procedures.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FROM IEQ EXPERIENCE**

*The strategies from IEQ experience have become stepping stones for continuing the work of designing and implementing classroom-based research projects*

With an approach premised on national priorities and an ongoing, locally managed research and development effort, IEQ teams over the years have tested many strategies that originate in the field. With the field as instructor, experience has allowed the program to appropriately emphasize techniques associated with success. Thus, the strategies from IEQ experience have become stepping stones for continuing the work of designing and implementing classroom-based research projects that improve the quality of education. Here are several key strategies:

*Learning is an ongoing process, which must be integrated into the design and implementation of the activity.*

IEQ is a learning community. Teams use several modes of “self-assessment,” such as quarterly documentation of the progress of IEQ

implementation within each of the major goals – and by country. Another mode is to reserve time during each on-site visit for a reflection with the local team. Sharing the findings following each data collection effort may result in a shift of the technical direction of an activity. A third technique is to hold bi-weekly telephone conference calls with the USA based core team members and the country team members who serve “long-term” with IEQ activities. These modes enable team members and technical advisors to keep in touch with the activities in-country, brainstorm ideas, and work together to address issues or challenges and plan together. The substantive developments emerge in written reports, dialog with team members on-site and by phone, and in multi-country colloquies, or IEQ Exchanges, at international meetings.

*Shifting from a relationship based on technical support to technical partnership with host country colleagues requires “letting go” and “taking on.”*

The IEQ story reveals a deliberate shift from technical support to partnership and ownership. It requires a commitment to membership in a learning community, recognition and acceptance that no team member has a monopoly on knowledge. Each team member IS a team member because of the skills, experiences, and perspectives he or she brings to the activity. The collaborative process requires “vigilance” by all – it requires time and patience and well-developed listening skills. The teams attempt to create a new climate for working with colleagues in host countries – many who attended the same schools, studied similar curricula, attained similar advanced degrees – but whose professional experience may have been constrained by infrequent opportunities to interact with people and to obtain technical materials (the Internet was not fully utilized). The international consultants, in many cases, have limited opportunities to know and experience the cultural conditions and knowledge of the national systems of the IEQ countries. All participants have to “let go” of some things and assume responsibility for others.

The tone of reciprocity among colleagues is essential to ensuring that IEQ reflects national country priorities and strengthens national capacity within individuals and institutions to conduct the activity. This does not occur immediately! It requires time, effort, and commitment to develop trust and build new relationships. Moreover, it is necessary to

*The IEQ story reveals a deliberate shift from technical support to partnership and ownership*

recognize that mistakes happen and can be transformed into learning experiences. While it often is more efficient to tell people what to do and how to do it than to facilitate the learning, that sort of non-interactive approach does not foster development – and is not IEQ.

*Research supported, discussed and used by” non-researchers” is a tool for sharing the agenda to improve educational quality.*

As a measure of success, IEQ pays close attention to the practical uses of knowledge emerging from the research, which then functions as a tool for policy decisions and program development. The findings are presented and shared in user friendly formats and environments among people typically not involved in such reflections – teachers, parents, pupils, district inspectors, as well as the people typically informed – those in policy positions at ministries of education.

In these information sharing activities, two important factors are at play. The first is *who* participates in the dialogue. IEQ shares information across hierarchical lines within the system, which moves toward a “democratic” process. IEQ breaks through barriers that traditionally isolate educators (often the disenfranchised) by inviting them to the table through conferences, workshops, and community meetings. One example is to share the knowledge, with teachers, about what pupils could and could not do in classrooms (e.g., follow simple instructions, write names, read from “below grade” text). Discussions then focus on how teachers could improve their teaching by pinpointing learning needs and suggesting methods to address those needs. Teachers become more engaged with their teaching and, for some, the absentee rate declines. The second factor is *what* is being discussed. The focus is on what happens in the classroom – teachers don’t know how to use textbooks; textbooks aren’t given to pupils; there is a high mobility rate of pupils; disconnects exist between the language of pupils and the language of instruction. As a consequence of *reflection* about these conditions, teachers, trainers and others gain insight into opportunities for improvement.

IEQ breaks through barriers that traditionally isolate educators by inviting them to the table

## Sharing Experience and Insights

No aspect of the work of IEQ is more critically important – or enjoyable – than the collaboration among educators with perspectives to share:

An IEQ  
Snapshot

*The IEQ/Malawi team – six members – sat at a conference table with representatives from Guatemala and Jamaica, comparing notes on disincentives to school attendance. One Malawi observer had just come from a school whose three teachers taught more than 800 pupils. She reported that children stay at home to raise other children, especially when one parent is deceased or both are gone. There are too few teachers in rural areas – and no one wants to be assigned to these remote outposts. The team leader from Guatemala suddenly leans forward. “You are exactly where we were 30 years ago,” he says. He moves on to discuss how collaborative research efforts were organized – and how educational improvement efforts were designed – to aid those most victimized during his country’s 38-year civil war. Everyone present listens.*

*Providing connections between national colleagues and the international community showcases the skills and experiences of national colleagues and provides opportunities for direct networking.*

This has been a most exciting outcome for IEQ. Opportunities for participants to travel within country and internationally, to be on the program of international conferences, to interact with IEQ colleagues from other countries, to represent their own work, and to build their own networks provide very affirming personal and professional experiences. The Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference, where IEQ has been represented annually since 1992, is followed by an IEQ Exchange of member countries, an event at which participants learn about one another’s activities and, in some cases, observe the activities in other countries. Many IEQ team members move outside their

professional circles to participate in IEQ, as, for example, university faculty becoming engaged in basic education. This is a transforming experience for many and leads to shifts in career direction.

*Establishing an institutional home within partner countries is a solid starting point for integrating and/or sustaining capacity strengthened during IEQ.*

Success  
can be  
measured  
by  
continued  
application  
of principles  
to new  
situations

The goal is not to sustain a project by perpetuating it following donor support, but to ensure that ideas, skills and methodologies are continuously integrated and applied within the context of national needs. A project does not need to be “sustained” in order to be successful. For example, housing IEQ within a local institution builds not only new individual professional skills, but strengthens the institution. Success can be measured by continued application of the principles to new situations. In order for policies to directly relate to improved teaching and learning, the cycle of improvement must be integrated into a national education system. Once this occurs, useful empirical information will be generated and used over time.

## FROM IMPLEMENTATION TO IMPACT

There are many sojourners on the path to quality. In the chapters that follow, team members offer their accounts of how the IEQ process was implemented in projects related to Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, and Eastern Europe. The case studies recount the painstaking work to first define and then improve educational quality, in part by melding the capabilities of the IEQ local teams with the devotion of individuals such as local teachers, policymakers, and parents.

Figure 3 offers a brief description of how each country applied the IEQ cycle of improvement. In the chapters that follow, the IEQ teams elaborate on the design and development of these efforts. Their stories also reveal a number of common themes related to classroom-based research activities:

- how the yield from IEQ research can be used to identify policy needs – including the disconnects between policies and their implementation – and provide evidence for policy development



- how in-country teams can be enhanced by involving non-researchers and engaging many members of communities
- how difficult – and concomitantly how valuable – it is to develop the sorts of linkages and accessible communications that enable policymakers to make use of research findings
- how critical the partnership model is to the creation of sustainable national competencies to conduct classroom-based research – and to the involvement of supportive organizations in those research efforts
- in a related matter, how important it is to a country's reform efforts to have local capacity building occur and thus to solidify the competency to conduct research and measurement activities
- how fundamental measurement is to a country's mission of understanding and addressing educational needs
- how IEQ can work as a change process

In the countries included here and in others throughout the world, the *Pathways to Quality* are being transformed – in some cases quickly being converted – from rough trails to the information superhighway. This case study anthology is dedicated to those education reformers who come next down the path, in the spirit that empirical research, and the process of doing it well, can light the way to a better future for all.

Figure 3: **The IEQII Case Studies**

<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Toward a practical view of the national language policy</b>  Strengthen Ghanaian capacity for conducting high-quality education research.
<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Research for improving bilingual education in bilingual settings</b>  Build capability in monitoring and evaluation and applied research, thereby providing the basis for analyzing the elements that affect the performance and quality of the Guatemalan bilingual education system.
<b>Haiti</b>	<b>Lessons learned from a classroom research study</b>  Help build a learning capacity within Haiti to better understand and act upon the key factors impacting on performance in basic education.
<b>Honduras</b>	<b>Developing an alternative program for a growing out-of-school population</b>  Assist Honduran educators to improve access to the middle school education system, particularly for rural areas to address employment.

Figure 3: **The IEQII Case Studies** *(continued)*

<b>Jamaica</b>	<p><b>Modernizing teacher education through curricular change</b></p> <p>Create the tools for building skills and knowledge among pre-service teachers that will allow them to successfully utilize the new primary school curriculum currently being implemented in Jamaican schools.</p>
<b>Malawi</b>	<p><b>Linking research to educational policy and practice</b></p> <p>Build and strengthen institutional capacity to design, manage, and utilize action research to inform local and national policy and practice leading to quality basic education.</p>
<b>Uganda</b>	<p><b>Using research to define quality in learning</b></p> <p>Develop research capacity within the Ugandan educational community to inform efforts for improving education and reporting on the impact of the primary education reform program.</p>
<b>Europe &amp; Eurasia</b>	<p><b>The IEQ Cycle as an Evaluation Tool</b></p> <p>Use IEQ principles as a tool for examining two models for democratizing school-based projects in five countries.</p>



# G H A N A

## *Toward a Practical View of the National Language Policy*

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**Purpose:** To strengthen Ghanaian capacity for conducting high-quality education research.

*In the first three years of primary education, the Ghanaian language prevalent in the local area is to be used as the medium of instruction, while English is studied as a subject.*

**– The National Language Policy of Ghana, 1971**

**G**hana is centrally located in the West African sub-region and shares boundaries with Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east and Côte D'Ivoire in the west. In the south is the Atlantic Ocean. Its population exceeds 18 million, of which half are females. A substantial proportion of the population is under age 15.

The challenge to the IEQ project concerns the more than 30 ethnic groups in the country – and the 60-plus languages that are spoken as the first language among these groups. About 44 percent of Ghanaians speak one of the Akan languages – including Twi and Fante; about 13 percent speak Ewe; and 8 percent speak Ga-Adangme-Krobo. Only 7 percent speak English as a second language. Thus the research questions for IEQ emanate from a severe practical problem facing the country: how Ghana's national language policy can be carried out within its mélange of cultures.

## **BACKGROUND**

Following independence in 1957, the Education Act of 1961 provided the Ghanaian child with free and compulsory basic education. During the 1960s, Ghana earned the reputation for having one of Africa's most advanced education systems. The late 1970s and early 1980s brought economic crisis, which left the economy and social sectors in shambles. Spending for education declined from 6.4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product in 1976 to 1.5 percent in 1983. Enrollment rates declined and a large number of trained teachers left the profession to seek greener pastures elsewhere (USAID/Ghana, Country Overview, 1996).

In 1990, the literacy level of the population had declined to 60 percent (World Bank Development Data Book, 1995). The primary level enrollment rate in 1991 was 77 percent. Although the 1961 Act demands that all children

*There are more than 30 ethnic groups in the country ... and they speak more than 60 languages as the first language*

be in school, currently about 30 percent of the eligible school-age children are not enrolled.

As a means of improving on the quality of education, the national government in 1971 established a policy of using the local languages as the medium of instruction from grades 1 through 3.

Ghana spends about 40 percent of its recurrent national budget on education; 65 percent of that is allocated to primary and junior secondary education, according to the 10-year Programme for the Development of Basic Education within the Framework of free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE), which extends until the year 2005. About 90 to 95 percent of the education budget is spent on salaries. This implies that very little funding is left for other needs, including teaching and learning materials. Further, the educational resources are inequitably distributed in favor of the southern half of the country and the urban centers.

With regard to the implementation of the language policy, no resources have been earmarked for the purpose. Textbooks and other teaching-learning materials were not produced for the teaching of and teaching in the local languages. As to human resources, teachers were not adequately prepared through pre- and in-service training to be able to teach in the local language. The problems of the lack of textbooks in the local languages and inadequate teacher preparation for the implementation of the policy are being addressed by the German Technical Cooperation initiative, through its program, the Assistance to Teacher Education Programme.

*English is the official language of Ghana, although the majority of Ghanaians neither speaks nor uses English as the first language*

#### **CONTROVERSY IN THE LANGUAGE POLICY**

English is the official language in Ghana, although the majority of Ghanaians neither speaks nor uses English as the first language. The English language is typically learned in school either as a second or third language, but it is used as the sole medium of instruction after Class Three (third grade).

Ghana has many languages of its own, but by force of historical and political circumstances, modern education is received through a foreign language (English), the roots and operational system of which are unrelated to local or indigenous languages within the country.

The pattern of language policy on the use of local languages in the Ghanaian educational system follows the historical development of the country. The first step in establishing a public educational system in Ghana was the “ordinance for the promotion and assistance of education in the Gold Coast Colony,” enacted in 1882. For a primary school to receive grant-aid, one of the conditions of the ordinance was “that the subjects of teaching shall be the reading and writing of the English language, Arithmetic, and in the case of females, plain needlework. The Grammar of the English Language, English History, and Geography, especially of the British Empire, may also be taught or not, at the option of the teacher, provided that if taught, they shall be taught as class subjects.”

*A number of critical incidents or pivotal events occurred that kept the momentum high*

In 1919, Sir Gordon Guggisberg, then British governor of the Gold Coast, shifted the language policy in favor of mother-tongue instruction. He maintained that school education should not denationalize recipients. A 1925 Education Ordinance known as the “Sixteen Principles” made the use of the mother tongue compulsory for lower primary instruction (Levels G1-G3). At the upper primary level (G4-G5), however, the mother tongue was to be replaced by English, studied as a subject in the curriculum.

In 1951, the government of Kwame Nkrumah initiated the Accelerated Development Plan, which reinforced the 1925 Education Ordinance position on language policy. It stated, “the aim of the primary school course will be to provide a strong foundation for citizenship with permanent literacy in both English and Vernacular.” This policy was reexamined in 1957 and English was made the language of instruction from the first year of schooling (G1). The policy change was instituted against the advice of the committee set up to study the language of instruction question; this committee advocated the continued use of mother-tongue instruction for the first three years of primary school.

The current school language policy – enunciated and clarified in 1973 – states that:

*“In the first three years of primary education, the Ghanaian language prevalent in the local area is to be used as the medium of instruction, while English is studied as a subject. From Primary Four, English replaces the Ghanaian language as medium of instruction and the Ghanaian language is then treated as just another subject on the timetable.”*

### *Obstacles to Implementation*

*The presence of many different mutually unintelligible languages poses the problem of selecting one*

While the language policy calls for the predominant Ghanaian language to be used as the method of instruction in the first three grades, only 10 of Ghana's more than 60 languages have been developed and used in this way. The policy implies that the local language for medium of instruction must necessarily be one of the 10 developed languages, but this is problematic in communities where children are fluent in one of the 50 local languages that is not officially recognized – and may not have an orthography.

In some communities, such as metropolitan areas, as well as rural environments (e.g., settler-farmer communities), multiple language groups exist. The presence of many different mutually unintelligible languages poses the problem of selecting one local language that would serve as the method of instruction.

Efforts of previous governments to select one local language to serve as the official language – and for use as the method of instruction – were met with resistance from other language groups. Other obstacles inhibiting the implementation of the language policy include:

- Teacher preparedness to teach in the mother tongue
- Negative attitudes of most stakeholders
- Availability of teaching and learning materials in the Ghanaian languages

### **RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE USE AND POLICY**

Although many studies have been done on language use and policy, most have been conducted outside Ghana. Research designs vary on the relationship between bilingualism and scholastic achievement. Some studies have compared the achievements of monolingual pupils with those of bilingual pupils who have to use their second language as a medium of instruction (Saer, 1923; Macnamara, 1967; Skutnabb-Kangus and Toukomaa, 1976, 1984, etc.). Others, including studies conducted in Ghana, compared the achievements of bilingual schoolchildren as they learned through their first language with their performance through the medium of a foreign language (Orata, 1953; Collison,



1972, 1975; Fafumwa, et. Al., 1989; Andoh-Kumi, 1992; cited in Andoh-Kumi, 1992 and 1997).

All of these studies came to the conclusion that:

- Bilingual pupils perform better in their first language than in their second language, especially when the second language is foreign
- Monolingual students perform better than their bilingual counterparts if the language of instruction is the language of the monolingual students

Moreover, researchers have established that the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction during one's early years of schooling results in improved acquisition of knowledge by pupils (Andoh-Kumi, 1992; Fafunwa, et. al., 1989; Hakuta, 1986; Collison, 1972). It also has been established that the use of the mother tongue as language of instruction is effective in helping with the acquisition of second languages.

## EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Educational quality is multi-dimensional, defined by various countries in various ways. At the national level in Ghana, quality of education is defined in terms of access to basic education, improved teaching and learning, relevance of the curriculum to social life and the world of work, and the efficiency with which fiscal, material, and human resources are utilized in the educational process. The national perspective of quality is enshrined in Ghana's free, compulsory, and universal basic education (fCUBE) program. This program is an initiative by which the government has committed itself to achieving universal access to basic education in 10 years (1996-2005) as well as improving educational services.

In Ghana's IEQII project, educational quality is defined to include active participation in learning and teaching, communication in and outside the classroom, pupil performance and achievement, and teacher preparedness to teach in the local language. Quality also takes into account gender considerations and development for citizenship. The IEQII perspective of quality education is not divorced from the national definition, but is within the general frame of the nation's perspective of educational quality. The project perspective of quality guided the research of IEQII.

*The government has committed itself to achieving universal access to basic education by 2005*

## ENTRY POINT

The IEQII project came into being in July 1999. Its focus is on learning, with particular concern for the implementation and impact of the official school language policy.

*The general belief, then, is that primary education, at least, is best begun in the child's mother tongue*

The choice of the language policy as a subject for research was due to the role that language plays in improving educational quality. Bamgbose (1978) asserts that in formal education, the degree of mastery in the language of instruction influences school achievement quite considerably. It follows from his assertion that a child who comes to school with a language of her own and then is introduced to learning in another language is bound to have problems which are different from those of a child taught in her mother tongue. The general belief, then, is that primary education, at least, is best begun in the child's mother tongue (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2001; Andoh-Kumi, 1992).

The choice of language policy as a research focus also stemmed from other considerations, including findings of the IEQI study.

## IEQI

In 1992, a partnership between IEQ and the University of Cape Coast, launched the Centre for Research on Improving Quality of Primary Education in Ghana (CRIQPEG) to conduct research designed to support the innovations of the Government of Ghana's primary school initiative begun with the support of USAID. Major activities of the Ghana Primary Education Program (PREP) included distributing textbooks and guides for 1.8 million school children; organizing a comprehensive in-service training program for approximately 30,000 primary teachers; and developing criterion-referenced testing (CRT) for grade 6 pupils in English and Mathematics. The research agenda from the four-year period between 1992 and 1996 evolved from investigating materials availability and use to research in fostering English language learning.

IEQ I/CRIQPEG researchers began by investigating the instructional process firsthand in primary classrooms. To complement PREP activities, they focused on the availability, sources, and uses of instructional materials in six schools in Ghana's Central Region. Phase 1 findings indicated that textbooks were not, in fact, reaching the children. Classroom observation and discussion

with teachers suggested that textbooks were not aligned with the children's skill levels and that teachers were not adequately prepared to bridge the gap. Coupled with low scores on the first round of criterion-referenced testing (CRT), the findings led policy makers to (1) modify and clarify the textbook policy to encourage textbook distribution and use, and (2) encourage CRIQPEG research objectives to shift and focus on English language learning.

The central research questions in Phase II explored the English language skills of Ghanaian primary school children, the factors in and out of the classroom that affect English language learning, and how English language learning could be improved. CRIQPEG's first task was to assess pupil skills along a continuum and to create diagnostic profiles of the children's skills. These profiles served as the basis for instructional intervention development and provided a baseline for monitoring pupil achievement. Researchers worked with educators, parents, and pupils to collect data on English language acquisition and the English language learning environment of pupils in 14 rural and urban primary schools in the Central and Western regions. All 14 schools received textbooks and participated in assessment components. In addition, instructional support was enhanced in seven of the schools, and stakeholders collaborated in all aspects of the assessment-assimilation-action cycle. One outcome of these findings was the implementation of professional development seminars to improve instructional practice in English and to include local regional supervisors in this process.

*One outcome was professional development seminars to improve instructional practice in English*

Other considerations guided the point of entry into the IEQII project.

Previous attempts to implement the language policy were beset with problems. A significant problem was the belief that the policy largely accounts for the low levels of literacy in English among pupils. To address these issues on the language policy and ensure its effective implementation, the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service (GES) set up a committee to revisit the policy and make recommendations. One of these recommendations was that research should be undertaken on the implementation of the policy in order to ensure its effective application. The recommendation emphasized that such a study should provide data on the impact of the use of the Ghanaian languages on pupils' performance at the basic level.

At a meeting of the IEQ research team in August 1999 to select a research topic, the team brainstormed major issues confronting the educational

system. The language policy emerged as the research topic that was most pressing and that integrated the varied interests of the research team.

### **CRITICAL INCIDENTS – PIVOTAL EVENTS**

In the course of IEQII, a number of critical incidents or pivotal events kept the momentum high. Several of these events warrant elaboration:

#### *Formation of a Research Team*

Researchers  
with different  
backgrounds  
and  
experiences  
were  
assembled to  
undertake the  
study

Early on, the project team decided that institutional collaboration should infuse the research activities; members were accordingly selected from four different institutions, made up of three universities (Cape Coast, Ghana, and University College of Education at Winneba) and the Ghana Education Service, which is responsible for implementing the government's school policies. Researchers with different backgrounds and experiences were assembled to undertake the study. With the spirit of participation and collaboration foremost in the design of the study, the GES and universities worked together on the same project, tapping whenever necessary the expertise gained by other organizations involved in promoting educational quality in Ghana. Such organizations include the USAID-funded Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) Project, which includes the Community School Alliances (CSA), Improved Learning through Partnerships, Project Monitoring and Evaluation, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). CSA, for example, assisted in the selection of schools in five districts for the study, and CRS helped the team select a site in the north.

#### *Capacity Building*

The IEQII Project enshrines capacity building. In light of this, researchers defined the capacity-building workshops as pivotal events in the project. Researchers received training on qualitative design and approaches (in-depth interviewing, focus group research, structured observation, etc.) and how to use qualitative research software. As a result, researchers have been able to teach these methods and techniques to their assistants at workshops and students at various university campuses, and to plan for the use of qualitative methods in future research studies. The provision of equipment (computers,

printers, photocopy machines) to each university reinforced the institutions' capacity to support research.

### *Establishing an Advisory Committee*

Soon after the research commenced, the project established a Research Advisory Committee (RAC) to provide advice on various issues. The University of Cape Coast Vice Chancellor, Samuel Adjepong, who also chairs the GES Council, chaired the RAC and called meetings on a quarterly basis or as necessary. Membership on the RAC was as all embracing as possible; it included representatives from the universities, the GES, regional and local educators, partner organizations, and school heads from research sites. The project emphasized the importance of ensuring that the RAC included people who would link IEQII to various segments of the educational system in order to facilitate access to and utilization of research findings, including the Directors of Basic Education and Teacher Education. The strategic nature of this was evidenced when the Deputy Director-General of Education, to whom the above Directors report, issued a circular to all schools in January 29, 2001, reminding “all Directors of Education and Headteachers of Basic Schools that the Policy on the use of Ghanaian Language as the medium of instruction in the first three years of Primary Education still applies.”

### *Dialogue with Stakeholders*

Since February 2000, IEQII researchers have engaged various stakeholders in a number of dialogues about issues of language and educational quality (see Table 1). This has been a critical part of the IEQII process. The dialogue has revealed divergent and opposing opinions about the policy at all levels. It has exposed myths and misunderstanding about language learning and the language policy. It has demonstrated that through exposure to research and facts about language learning combined with discussion, community stakeholders can quickly come to see the value of the policy and support its proper implementation. However, ambivalence toward implementation at the highest levels continues to support non-implementation of the policy.

*Dialogues about issues of language and educational quality have been a critical part of the IEQ process*

An important instance of dialogue with high-level stakeholders involved the Minister of Parliament (also Chair of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education), who attended the Development Partner Thematic Group meeting

to hear research findings presented and expressed keen interest. The sense of urgency about conducting the policy is coupled with an awareness that the policy has not changed for 30 years and that an Act of Parliament – not an easy feat – would be required to change it.

#### *Participation in International Conferences*

*Visiting schools with bilingual programs was important in helping the researchers develop a vision of what was possible in Ghana*

Members of the IEQII research team participated in the Comparative and International Education Society's (CIES) annual conference and the IEQ Exchange in March 2000 and March 2001. Six researchers presented a total of 10 conference papers. They had the opportunity to share their research findings with the international community and gained from their research and educational experiences. This opportunity was valuable for knowledge sharing. It also contributed to the professional development of the Ghanaian academics whose advancement, as with professors in the U.S. and other countries, is contingent on research, writing, and publications.

Prior to attending the CIES conference in San Antonio, Texas in 2000, four IEQII researchers visited schools with bilingual programs in the U.S. where students successfully began studying in their mother tongue and made the transition to English in upper primary grades. Since the researchers had found little evidence of adequate policy implementation in Ghana, this was important in helping the researchers develop a vision of what was possible for mother tongue instruction in Ghana as well.

Table 1: **Strategies for Stakeholder Participation**

<u><b>Mechanism</b></u>	<u><b>Venue</b></u>	<u><b>Stakeholders Present</b></u>
<b>Development Partner Thematic Group</b>	Accra	GES, Development Partners, Chairman of the Parliament Select Committee on Education
<b>Research Advisory Committee</b>	Cape Coast	University Representatives, GES Headquarters, School Managing Committee (SMC) Chairs, Teachers, District Directors, USAID
<b>National Teacher Education Forum</b>	Winneba	Teacher Educators from Universities, GES, Development Partners, Minister of Education
<b>National Forum On Educational Development</b>	Accra	Donor Partners, Primary School Heads & Teachers, Regional Directors, District Directors, Circuit Supervisors, SMCs, PTA
<b>Launching of Interim Report</b>	Accra	Officials from GES, MOE, Development Partners, Ghana Education Service Council
<b>Focus Group Interviews</b>	Sites of Study	District Directors, Circuit Supervisors, Parents, Community Leaders, and Teachers
<b>Meetings with Minister of Education</b>	Accra	RAC Chair, Minister of Education
<b>National Seminar On Language Policy</b>	Cape Coast	Policymakers, Policy Implementers, Development Partners, Other Stakeholders

## PURSUING – AND DOCUMENTING – IMPROVEMENTS

*After analyzing a second data set, researchers developed a heightened concern about teacher preparation*

The hallmark of all IEQ projects is the cycle of assessment, analysis, and action. At the assessment stage of Phase One, the IEQ/Ghana research team collected data through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations of the classroom and school environment and activities. These data were collected in Fall 1999, analyzed in January 2000, with findings published in an interim report released six months later. After collecting and analyzing a second data set in Spring 2000, the researchers – the majority of whom were teacher educators – developed a heightened concern about the inadequate preparation of primary teachers for mother tongue instruction. Since an intervention was beyond the scope (i.e., not in the budget) of this project, the researchers used data set #2 findings to inform the next set of research questions for data set #3. They applied the skills developed in primary school classroom observations and interviews to conducting research in Teachers Training Colleges (TTCs) for data set #3. Given the purpose of the IEQII study, to strengthen Ghanaian capacity for conducting high-quality education research and to provide information of additional value to the QUIPS project (see page 30), the team collaborated with QUIPS PME researchers to collect data on learning gains for pupils in Classes Two/Three and Three/Four. This enabled researchers to further develop quantitative research skills alongside qualitative skills.

In documenting the IEQ cycle of assessment, analysis, and action, the project produced the following materials:

- An interim report based on the first of three data sets. In June 2001 the team began preparing the final report for release this year.
- Articles and conference papers, including two articles published in the IEQ Quality Link Newsletter and 10 conference papers presented at Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Conferences in the U.S.
- A Handbook intended to serve as a guide for researchers who would like to undertake similar qualitative studies.
- This Case Study Anthology.
- A booklet for teacher educators on the research and socio-political background of mother tongue instruction in Ghana



For the culminating event of the study, more than 70 participants were invited to a National Seminar on the School Language Policy in October, 2001. The meeting was specifically designed to give policymakers, policy implementers, development partners, and other stakeholders the chance to deliberate and prepare to act on and practically apply the research findings on the school language policy.

## PROCESS OF THE STUDY

The formation of the research team and Research Advisory Committee described in the “critical incidents” above initiated the study process. The project team first gathered at a workshop in August 1999 and selected the research topic, “Implementation of School Language Policy in Ghanaian Primary Schools.” The IEQ/Ghana team then designed a multi-site case study, adopting a qualitative research approach and a multi-site design including primary schools from six different regions of the country, comprising urban, semi-urban, and rural schools.

The technical advisor trained the researchers in the use of qualitative techniques for data collection. Then the team developed and pilot tested data collection instruments for individual interviews of pupils, teachers, head teachers, community members, circuit supervisors, and district directors. They also prepared community focus group guidelines and inventories for checking school documents. Researchers then trained research assistants on qualitative data collection techniques. Research teams spent one week in a school. Data analysis and report writing followed as a necessary step in the process. The project team then facilitated dialogues with various stakeholders to achieve better dissemination and practical application of the research findings.

Initially, this study on the implementation of school language policy focused on the classroom and related activities. As the study progressed, however, the project team recognized the need for flexibility. Indeed, the research team identified a new critical factor: teacher preparedness to provide instruction in the local language. This new insight required the project to broaden its focus and examine teaching and learning programs in the initial teacher training colleges.

*The team designed a multi-site case study, including primary schools from six different regions of the country*

## RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The IEQ/Ghana study has revealed the various ways the language policy was being implemented in the schools and the consequences for teaching and learning. The chief findings from the data collection included the following:

*No school or education office in the study had a copy of the official language policy document*

1. Education officials and teacher trainers were aware of the policy; however, some primary school teachers and most parents did not know the policy existed. No school or education office in the study had a copy of the official language policy document.
2. Most teachers preferred to use English as medium of instruction in lower primary classes, but pupils' inability to understand compelled some teachers to use both English and local languages in Classes One and Two. Pupils visibly and obviously became engaged in learning when the medium shifted to the local languages. All Class One pupils interviewed said they preferred/wanted teachers to use the Ghanaian language so that they could understand and learn what was being taught.
3. All textbooks except Ghanaian language storybooks are in English. Ghanaian language textbooks were lacking in every school.
4. Teachers seemed ill-equipped and ill-prepared to teach the Ghanaian languages and use them as media of instruction. No system-wide in-service training schemes for teachers exist, although teachers would welcome these interventions.
5. Those children who speak languages without an orthography (e.g., Ahanta), have to begin their studies in a second (official) Ghanaian language (e.g., Fante) and learn English as a third language.
6. Some teachers are posted in areas where they do not speak or understand the local languages.
7. Initially stakeholders indicated they preferred English as a medium of instruction. There is a perception that English is more cosmopolitan, that competence in it enhanced educational

attainment and *takes people to places where they can better fulfill their potential* and that an English medium from Class One contributes to greater fluency in it. Stakeholders mistakenly believe that not using the mother tongue helps children to learn English more quickly. The research does not support this belief.

8. When the official policy was outlined to parents, many correctly deduced some of the policy's benefits, such as, children's use of local languages enhancing teaching and learning; the creation of continuities rather than discontinuities between home and school environment; and cultural awareness.
9. Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) lack the tutors (i.e., teacher educators) and the resources, including textbooks, to prepare future teachers adequately to implement the policy. Most new TTC entrants have not studied a Ghanaian language in Senior Secondary School and are ill-prepared to benefit from the TTC instruction intended to help them implement the policy. Too few of the more than 60 Ghanaian languages are offered in the colleges; hence, many TTC students are compelled to study languages they do not understand for very short periods of time.
10. In summary, in the absence of Ghanaian language materials, adequately prepared teachers, awareness of the school language policy, and the political will to implement the policy, the language policy has not been implemented nationwide since its inception. Blaming educational failures on this never-implemented language policy is a serious error. Other countries such as Papua New Guinea, where nearly 300 languages are spoken, are successfully implementing a mother tongue language policy (Klaus, 2001). A comprehensive research study should be conducted in Ghana to definitively address the question of the value of mother tongue instruction for quality primary school education in Ghana.

*Blaming educational failures on this never-implemented language policy is a serious error*

In addition to the above findings, the IEQII study has engendered recommendations for effective implementation or possible modification of the national language policy. The study has achieved its ultimate goals: to generate knowledge about the use of the Ghanaian language and/or English as the medium of instruction in the classroom and to create or use existing

mechanisms to share the study findings and implications. Several factors made it possible to achieve these goals:

*Key factors in the success of the study were enhancement of local research capacity and opportunity for professional growth*

- The commitment of the researchers and the coordinator to the study;
- The enhancement of local research capacity and the opportunity for professional growth and development through the research;
- The cooperation and personal interest of the technical advisor;
- Monthly meetings of researchers to discuss relevant issues;
- Support from the chair of the Research Advisory Committee;
- Strong support and interest shown by the USAID/Ghana coordinator for the project between 1999-2000; and
- Equipment – including computers and photocopiers – provided for the project

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The IEQII study provided the team with the opportunity to absorb a number of valuable lessons that will guide them in similar research endeavors in the future. The major lessons learned include:

- A. Institutional collaboration resulted in enrichment of this major research study, due to the pool of diverse experiences and skills made available to the project.
- B. Qualitative research methods enabled insights to be gained on many levels. Through classroom observations researchers were able to triangulate what teachers said about teachers' and pupils' use of English and the Ghanaian language with what actually took place in classroom interactions. Through statements made in open-ended interviews, researchers were able to prepare a portrait of adult stakeholders' and pupils' attitudes toward the use of Ghanaian languages and English. Examining documents and textbooks (and their lack) enabled researchers to draw conclusions and suggest options for policy implementation.

- C. Inadequate countrywide communication networks often did not permit instant sharing of information among the coordinator, researchers, and the sites. Notwithstanding these frustrating communications constraints, the project went forward based on the high level of cooperation and good will engendered.
- D. Despite solid research that points to logical decisions for implementing existing policy such as resulted from IEQII, political decisions can override the conclusions and recommendations based on research findings. In IEQII, just prior to the national seminar, the Minister of Education made it known that he did not want USAID to support language policy implementation efforts, and IEQII researchers were challenged to seek other support for initiating research on the efficacy of mother tongue instruction in Ghana.

*Political decisions can override conclusions based on research findings*

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## 2

# GUATEMALA

## *Research for Improving Bilingual Education in Bilingual Settings*

**IEQ/Guatemala Team:** Fernando Rubio – Coordinator; Rigoberto Vasquez; Hipolito Hernandez; Heidy Escobar; Carmelina Ixcoy; Heather Simpson

**Institutions:** Directorate of Biligual Education (DIGEBI); Asociación de Investigadores Mayas de Guatemala (AIMAGUA).

**Purpose:** To build capability in monitoring and evaluation and applied research, thereby providing the basis for analyzing the elements that affect the performance and quality of the Guatemalan bilingual education system.



*Most of the studies of the Maya culture and other indigenous communities were done or are being done by foreign specialists. One goal for Guatemala is to form a national network of Maya researchers.*

For the 38 years leading up to December of 1996, Guatemala suffered one of the most bitter civil wars in the hemisphere. Then the armed conflict formally stopped with the signing of the peace accords between the Guatemalan Government (GOG) and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). The armed conflict exacerbated the already extreme conditions of poverty in the country, particularly for the rural populations, indigenous populations, and for women.

The Peace Accords – particularly the Accord for the Identity and Rights of the Indigenous People – established, among other things, the right to recognition of the identity of indigenous communities, their cultural expressions, the use and promotion of the indigenous languages, and access to education in the mother tongue of the children.

In the same accord, the GOG agreed to comprehensive Education Reform (ER) of the education system in the country. This education reform demands the delivery of quality education with cultural and linguistic relevance, and the formation of indigenous technicians and the training for indigenous professionals in the different areas required by the reform.

This chapter presents a case study of the Improving Educational Quality (IEQII) Project in Guatemala, with attention to the personal experiences of the project personnel and that of the counterpart personnel from the Dirección General de Educación Bilingüe Intercultural (DIGEBI), the principal partner in the project. In the case study, IEQ implementation strategies are examined and key events of the project are used as examples to highlight successes.

Throughout the project, emphasis has been placed not only on the final products but also on the process for developing the final products. The basic premise guiding the work was that of mutual collaboration with the local partners, starting from their experiences, building cooperative relationships and

*This education reform demands the delivery of quality education with linguistic relevance*

contributing to strengthening their individual and organizational capacity to use results and evaluation findings to design and implement educational policy and decision making.

The Guatemalan mission operates in a political and historical context, to which it has responded by articulating a strategy that centers on building local capacity. This chapter describes the overall work of the mission – and elaborates the IEQ project, which is devoted to building local capacity.

## **EDUCATION AS A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

The United States Agency of International Development Guatemala (USAID/G) Mission has developed a six-year strategy for 1997-2003. This strategy concentrates on supporting the Guatemalan government and population in reaching the goals and objectives of the Peace Accords and focuses efforts on the support of the indigenous population, which suffered the most during the civil war.

*One of the strategic objectives is the strengthening of rural education for the indigenous population*

One of the strategic objectives is the strengthening of rural education for this population. The USAID/G has worked more than two decades supporting the development and strengthening of education programs at all levels for indigenous populations. In this respect, one aspect of the USAID/G's strategy seeks to strengthen the development of bilingual teachers in-service and pre-service, support the development of bilingual materials, support the participation of parents in bilingual education programs – including monitoring of these programs, support the Department of Bilingual/Intercultural Education within the Ministry of Education (DIGEBI) to first strengthen capacity, and then develop and coordinate education policies for the Bilingual and Intercultural Education (EBI) effort in the Ministry of Education (MOE).

The Improving Quality Education Project is one of the USAID/G's activities to reach the strategic objective and concentrates efforts on the fourth point from the above list. Among the specified tasks of the project, one of the most important ones is the strengthening and improving of the capacity of the professionals working to design and conduct applied education research and evaluation, and to promote usage of the findings of such work for decision making and development of guidelines and policies.

One of the most important aspects at the start of the project was positioning the project in such a way that it would be recognized easily by the local education community, such that the objectives of the project could readily be identified. Due to this, the project was named “Medición de Indicadores y Resultados,” giving it the acronym MEDIR – which means “to measure” in Spanish.

*The project name, the acronym MEDIR, means “to measure” in Spanish*

The focus of the MEDIR project has been to link all project actions to the central idea of strengthening local capacity for carrying out applied research and research in education. Reaching this goal has required an implementation strategy based on three fundamental ideas. First the project identifies and draws upon local experience in such a way that this experience is strengthened, therefore encouraging and facilitating the participants to take ownership of the work from the start. Second, the project has focused on establishing working relationships with a variety of members of the Guatemalan education community, ranging from people working at the community level to people working at the national level – including the Ministry of education, members of the civil society, and Mayan organizations. Third, the project focuses on strengthening local capacity to design, develop, and conduct applied research and evaluation activities in education.

## **THE LOCAL EXPERIENCE**

Despite the fact that in Guatemala the development of applied education evaluation and research are in the initiating phases in terms of methodologies and utilization of findings, valuable experience exists in the area – both in the government as well as non-government sectors. DIGEBI research and evaluations have been conducted for almost 15 years. DIGEBI has a group of evaluators in each of the departments (as the Guatemalan states are known) in which the organization works. While this group of investigators has had many limitations to expand the reach of their work (e.g. lack of education statistics that take into consideration ethnicity and language ability, and limited resources resulting in sporadic visits to the schools involved with EBI), they have accumulated valuable experience. Likewise, the non-governmental sector have been involved in research and some evaluation activities. Some of this work has been carried out with single departments, but others have covered the entire Meso-American region. These activities have resulted in the creation of a small but invaluable body of knowledge and local experiences.

## THE COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

*All activities have been designed and implemented together with local program personnel, building capacity through joint problem solving*

From the beginning of the IEQ project all activities have been designed and implemented together with local program personnel. These local actors include DIGEBI – at both the national and departmental levels – as well as the department education Directorate and local civil society organizations, including Mayan NGOs. This strategy has made the work an integral part of the different organizations while building capacity through joint problem solving and thereby contributing to the likelihood that monitoring and evaluation efforts will continue within the organizations after IEQ is completed.

### STRENGTHENING LOCAL CAPACITY

The local capacity building initiative has been developed both directly and indirectly. It has been done through workshops, thematic trainings, support of evaluation and monitoring efforts of the organization as well as different methods of dissemination of the results of different studies and analysis. The participants in these types of activities include a wide variety of local individuals from field investigators to decision makers at the highest level of the MOE.

Three key events show the results of the strategy. The project has been able to develop and sustain a long-term relationship with DIGEBI; it has facilitated the formation of a national Network of Maya Researchers; and it has successfully collaborated with the NGO, Refugee Children of the World (Niños Refugiados del Mundo [NRM].) It is hoped, from the point of view of the project, that these activities continue for at least another year. But in all of the cases, it is anticipated that local counterparts will continue the activities once the project is finished.

In the first case, the partner is the office in the Ministry of Education, which is in charge of regulating, evaluating, and administering bilingual education services to a population whose mother tongue can be any of the 22 indigenous languages of Guatemala. In the second case, forming a network of Mayan Researchers, the colleagues are Mayan-speaking professionals with experience, responsibilities, and interest in applied research and evaluation in education. In the third case, the counterpart is an international organization that has developed experience in early childhood education and now supports local technicians and parents' groups in 18 communities in one of the zones most

affected by the armed conflict, in the Ixil speaking region of the department of Quiché.

## **SUSTAINED COOPERATION WITH DIGEBI**

The principal partner of MEDIR is DIGEBI, which has technical personnel in 12 departments of the country with mainly Mayan speaking populations and develops bilingual and bicultural education activities in 14 of the 21 Mayan languages in Guatemala. DIGEBI offers two types of bilingual education services: services through third grade in the four principal Maya languages of the country (K'iche', Mam, Qeqchi, and Kaqchikel), and preschool services in the other languages.

The MEDIR project has developed its work both at the regional level ~~and~~ in the department of El Quiché, as well as at the national level. The work in the department of El Quiché has been focused on an evaluation of the bilingual and bicultural education services in the department. The work in this department acted as a pilot of monitoring and evaluation in the first years of the project so that later it can be replicated in other departments in which DIGEBI is working. The final evaluation design, the final design of the research instruments, and the training of the personnel for the field work has occurred with strong collaboration among DIGEBI personnel in the department. At the same time, the dissemination of findings has occurred in close collaboration with these technical personnel.

The collaboration on the national level has been with the Evaluation and Research Unit in DIGEBI. In partnership with this group, IEQ has worked with investigators and evaluators in each of the departments. The main effort has been directed at strengthening education evaluation capacity and developing a monitoring system for EBI.

*The main effort has been directed at strengthening education evaluation capacity and developing a monitoring system*

During the initial stage of DIGEBI activities, the supervision system and pedagogical support were managed by bilingual supervisors who developed supervision and orientation techniques related to a variety of processes. These included identifying educational materials and the application of bilingual educational materials; supporting school directors with respect to bilingual teachers and technology; preparing teaching plans in Maya languages; elaborating bilingual didactic materials; communicating and coordinating with the education community; and executing community development projects.

*The project also conducted some research and evaluation work, including internal efficiency and testing evaluations*

The above activities influenced the achievement of important accomplishments in bilingual education such as the following: acceptance of the bilingual education process by the education community members, teachers and students; increase in school enrollment; high promotion in school; high retention in school; and low grade repetition.

Besides monitoring, the project conducted some research and evaluation work, including some internal efficiency and testing evaluations. Government funding did not, however, support all this work. With bureaucratic changes late in the 80s and early in the 90s, as well as the termination of international funding, a system for supervision and monitoring in connection with bilingual education failed to take root in the Ministry of Education.

To ensure that educational reforms and the Bilingual and Intercultural Education (EBI) efforts in the Ministry of Education would be successful, the IEQ/Guatemala project designed an education monitoring system with the following objectives to:

1. Monitor student achievement;
2. Provide information for improvement of educational quality; and
3. Promote a culture evaluation to generate competent techniques and positive attitudes on the part of the teachers and other players in education.

Moreover, to achieve these objectives, the project determined that any initiation of an evaluation system, like all other parts of the experience, should begin with a pilot containing the following characteristics:

1. Validation of the experience during the process;
2. A relatively low cost, which allows the MOE to implement it without the help of external funding;
3. Every instrument or experience first should be piloted and later replicated globally; and

4. Every validated experience should go towards increased accomplishment.

### *Accomplishments*

As a result of the efforts carried out jointly by IEQ/Guatemala and DIGEBI, the following have been accomplished:

- Building capacity of the evaluators of the Monitoring System of Bilingual and Bicultural Education.
- Coordination of the evaluation of monitoring activities concerning bilingual education quality in El Quiché in 1999 and 2000.
- Revision and implementation of the test of knowledge in Mayan language for first grade.
- Design of indicators for bilingual and bi-cultural education.
- Coordination of workshops and conferences for Bilingual Education.
- For the year 2000: the establishment of the Evaluation and Monitoring of Quality in Bilingual and Bicultural Education system.
- Elaboration and piloting of a battery of instruments for monitoring education quality at the classroom level.
- Formation and strengthening of thematic workshops during the past two years for evaluators and researchers examining the system for monitoring and evaluating DIGEBI. The workshops covered various topics, including a) quality of education and indicators for education quality; b) monitoring educational quality; c) monitoring as a tool for improving educational quality; and d) elaboration and testing of evaluation instruments.
- Presentation of the research to study circles of quality teachers at the Central American Education Reform Conference in San Salvador, January 1998.

*The project built capacity among the evaluators of the monitoring system for bilingual and bicultural education*

### **FORMATION OF THE GROUP OF MAYA INVESTIGATORS, AIMAGUA**

The absence of an organization made up of ethnic groups to perform studies relating to different elements of their culture from their own perspective led the IEQ/Guatemala project to form systems of investigators for the Mayan culture as well as other indigenous groups of the Meso-American area.

This need was made apparent when the Foundation Rigoberta Menchú Tum did a study, “A Diagnostic of the Education Reality of the Indigenous Towns and Other Original People of Meso-America” (DIREPI). This study was done in 1996 and 1997, financed by the Netherlands, with technical consulting



from UNESCO. The project found it difficult to recruit specialists to conduct the study, in large part because the educational systems of the region have not yet seen the importance and usefulness of research concerning the education and culture of the different ethnic groups that populate the region. Due to the absence of this sort of activity in the university system, many professionals lack specialization in research and evaluation in general.

Most of the studies of the Maya culture and other indigenous communities were done or are being done by foreign specialists. While it is recognized that excellent works exist, few are known by the investigated groups. Most of the works that have been completed have remained in archives and libraries outside of the reach of the subjects of the studies. The same dormancy occurs when local experts do the studies.

The traditional way to communicate the findings of the studies is itself a barrier. In general, a vertical form of communication is used. This is to say that the investigators only or principally communicate their findings with the institution that supported the study. At the same time, there is little or no communication of the same findings with local colleagues. Thus, there are few if any procedures that we can call horizontal communication.

*An important product of the workshop was a manual on conducting evaluations in bilingual settings, produced both in Spanish and K'iche'*

In recognition of these difficulties, the initial purpose in forming a group of colleagues was to contribute to the reconstruction, systematization, and diffusion of the different elements that make up the cultures of the different existing ethnic groups.

The initial implementation of this idea came when MEDIR held a workshop on evaluation techniques for Mayan leaders representing public sector and civil society organizations. The workshop focused on procedures for responding to educational issues facing Mayan educators. An important product of the workshop was a manual on conducting evaluations in bilingual settings, produced both in Spanish and K'iche', the Mayan language of the region where the workshop was held.

The workshop activity generated interest in a follow-up meeting, which, in turn, resulted in two significant developments:



- Organizing a group of Maya investigators to strengthen indigenous professionals in the area of educational research and evaluation, with initial support for the USAID IEQII Project.
- Organizing an initial meeting of Maya researchers that would allow an exchange of experiences in the area of education and Mayan culture research. This first formal meeting convened 20 participants in July 1999. The name, Asociación de Investigadores Mayas de Guatemala AIMAGUA, Oxlajuj Aj, was adopted.

The association was formally recognized with a notarizing act September 10th at the NGO, Sociedad el Adelanto in Quezaltenango. In this initial stage, the association meets monthly. In each meeting a study by one of the members or an active person is used as a tool for reflection and learning. This is done in hopes of strengthening horizontal communication channels and amplifying the education research and monitoring capacity of the members. The second part of the agenda is to discuss details of the organization itself.

*At each meeting, a research study is used as a tool for reflection and learning*

The association is making efforts to ensure that it will survive and continue working once the support of IEQII is removed. Initially, each member paid an entrance fee. The group has organized different commissions, which focus on different aspects of the organization. At present, 27 people are active members of the association.

As part of the formation process of AIMAGUA, its members agreed to develop strengthening and education research activities as a central part of the association. This led the project to organize training sessions and to conduct at least one common research effort including all members. That process is described below.

### *Training in the Methodology of Research*

The first training of the members of AIMAGUA took place September 23-26, 2000. The principle goal of the meeting was to prepare specialists in the methodology of research, especially in the research of education, to create a common base of experience and knowledge on the bilingual and intercultural reality of the Maya community in Guatemala.

*The project organized a series of intense training sessions on qualitative research methodology – 120 hours over a year*

The project organized a series of intense training sessions on the qualitative research methodology (120 hours over a year's time) and, at the same time, encouraged the choice of a topic of research in such a way that the development work would be tied to the research work.

The trained investigators are 25 people who presently perform the research in different communities around the country. Their training objectives include working to design and perform an education research project as a group and to strengthen the experience of the Maya investigators in the methodology of research; motivating the researchers to strengthen their development and self-development in the area of education research and evaluation through activities in the association; and designing a research plan that will be used by the members in the research field.

The topic agreed upon during the planning and design methodology of the research is "The Maya Endogenous Education," with attention to the following themes: knowledge, methods, reinforcement, values, spirituality, medicine, psychology, and others.

At the moment, the research is in the execution phase, with some members having completed it and others still under way. The ones who have done the research are in the transcription and revision phase, following a March 2001 workshop in which the data were analyzed with the help of experts. The results of this study were expected to be ready for reporting by the end of November, 2001.

#### **COLLABORATION WITH NIÑOS REFUGIADOS DEL MUNDO**

Only about 10 percent of the Guatemalan population has access to early childhood education. Except for state day-care centers, a small Ministry of Education program, Programa de Atención a la Infancia y a la Niñez (PAIN) and initial education centers (most of which are private centers in the principal urban areas of the country), there are no formal education programs for children younger than five years old. In the rural zones and especially in the indigenous areas, there are no programs of this type. In this context, the experience of IEQ with the NGO, Niños Refugiados del Mundo (Refugee Children of the World), is discussed.

The NGO, Niños Refugiados del Mundo (NMR) has developed an early education project for children three to six years of age. This program has been in place for more than 10 years in the Ixil speaking areas of the department of El Quiché. This zone was severely affected by the internal armed conflict. It suffered some of the worst massacres in the 1980s and a big part of the population is made up of displaced refugees, most of whom are Ixil and K'iche' speaking. The education model has been developed in close collaboration with parents and local educators to ensure cultural and linguistic pertinence. Due to the lack of educators, a dual model has been developed to train preschool teachers and work with the children simultaneously. The preschool teachers are members of the community who, upon starting their work, had between four and nine years of formal education.

*The preschool teachers are members of the community who, upon starting their work, had between four and nine years of formal education*

Upon learning in more detail about the experience, it was noted that much could be understood by examining the study itself. This study also allowed the MEDIR project to more clearly satisfy its objectives. In parallel fashion, the NMR wanted to do a systematic evaluation of its work in the area; this allowed for a formal agreement seeking the following objectives through collaborative efforts:

- Establish the lessons that can be learned from this experience. This may include lessons relating to the effectiveness of the intervention, the development of a culturally and linguistically appropriate curriculum, and/or personal development for the professional.
- Determine the impact of the intervention on the girls and boys participating in the program, and the effectiveness level of the program.
- Strengthen the capacity of the local personnel of the NMR in utilizing evaluation results for the improvement of the intervention.
- Determine the effectiveness, cost, and potential for replication of the intervention in similar contexts in different parts of the country.
- Develop dissemination activities about the innovation in such a way that they inform decision makers of important aspects for future expansion of early education services.
- Facilitate activities of training or strengthening of evaluators and research of education directed at preschool aged children.

Through the collaborative work, MEDIR has been able to learn from the local experience, and at the same time support improvement of the innovation. This is being achieved by:

1. Contributing to the development of a climate favorable to evaluation of the effort. Teachers, local technical personnel and administrators are in the process of developing a monitoring and evaluation approach to their work.
2. Helping local technical personnel to use evaluation results for decision making and improving practice.
3. Developing and adapting procedures and instruments for data gathering in rural preschool settings, as well as training local personnel to do so.

It is expected that as a result of this effort, both the NGO and the MEDIR project will be better able to influence policy design regarding early childhood education.

### SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Some reflections are in order regarding the IEQII experience in Guatemala. Succinctly put, local capacity building is a daunting task. Indeed, for the successful integration of educational evaluation results and applied research into policy design and improved practice, three elements are critical for success:

1. **Time:** the intervening project has to adjust to the partners' time framework. Partnerships require time to become workable and useful, and personnel at national, regional and local levels need time to incorporate the effort into their work routines. Furthermore, local capacity building in applied research and evaluation may seem to have little importance at the beginning, until partners realize how the information can be applied to their own work
2. **Credibility:** Some initial credibility may have been partially responsible for the initial success of the project up to this moment. In fact, the local USAID mission was recognized as the leader agency supporting educational evaluation and research. In the same vein, the project coordinator and the principal external consultant both have established a solid record in the country. Finally, the other member of the local team is a veteran of intercultural bilingual education, with a track record of successful teaching, research and management of bilingual education. Furthermore, as one of the leaders in establishing AIMAGUA, he has a dual role of "insider" within IEQ and "outsider", as a partner in MEDIR's work with the new NGO. This has given the project a

*MEDIR's work was seen as coming from the efforts of real partners and not outside consultants*

unique perspective on the distinctive capabilities and work context of the different partners. MEDIR's location within the offices of DIGEBI during the first two years of the project also provided credibility in the sense that MEDIR's work was seen as coming from the efforts of real partners and not outside consultants.

3.       **Collaboration:** Learning from – and building on – local experience seems fundamental to long-term success. Insofar as the local partners perceive the current situation as a result of past experiences and as the foundation for future ones, a sense of ownership and shared responsibility is developed. This makes possible the attainment of goals for further improvement of educational quality.

3

# HAITI

## *Lessons Learned from a Classroom Research Study*

**IEQ/Haiti Team:** Ron Israel – Coordinator;  
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**Institution:** Fondation Haïtienne de  
l'Enseignement Privé (FONHEP)

**Purpose:** Help build a learning capacity  
within Haiti to better understand and act  
upon the key factors impacting on  
performance in basic education.

*The IEQ/Haiti project underscores the importance of establishing a working relationship between researchers and the policymakers who have the wherewithal to act on the findings.*

From January 1998 to May 1999, the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project sponsored a pilot research activity to contribute to better understanding of teaching and learning conditions in Haitian classrooms. The central goals of the Haiti IEQ Project were to (a) develop research capacity within the Haitian educational community; (b) to inform efforts to improve education in Haiti; and (c) to establish baseline data for future efforts to measure the impact of the national education reform program. The specific objectives of the pilot project were to:

- strengthen the methodological capacity of the Haitian research community;
- create opportunities for dialogue and partnerships among Haitian policy makers and practitioners;
- facilitate professional linkages between Haitian researchers and the international educational research and development community;
- respond to information needs expressed by key stakeholders in primary education;
- explore the culture and conditions in selected schools and create opportunities for dialogue about actions to support improvement; and
- provide formative information from which to assess the educational reform efforts.

This Case Study describes how the IEQ classroom research activity was designed and carried out, and what was learned through the study about classroom conditions in Haitian primary schools. The Case Study also takes a critical look at how information from the IEQ research activity could have been better utilized to inform education policy in Haiti, and identifies lessons learned

*This study takes a critical look at how information from the research activity could have been better utilized to inform education policy*

from the IEQ Haiti Project that relate to the task of building educational research capacity in developing countries.

### **THE HAITI RESEARCH PROJECT -- ORIGINS AND ORGANIZATION**

In the fall of 1997, the USAID IEQ Project Officer visited Haiti and negotiated with the USAID Mission in Haiti the framework for an IEQ-sponsored research study that would examine conditions of teaching and learning in primary school classrooms. The study was intended to be in the spirit of IEQ's initial work in many countries, i.e. an exploration of the factors supporting and/or constraining educational quality at the classroom level. It sought to meet an important need felt by many donor agencies, i.e. the absence of any reliable data regarding classroom conditions in Haiti.

The USAID IEQII Project Officer agreed to support the study with funds from the Project's core budget, and if it bore fruit and sparked interest among policymakers, the USAID Mission in Haiti agreed to consider funding follow-up or next step activities.

It was agreed by the USAID IEQII Project Officer and the USAID Mission to house the research activity at FONHEP (La Fondation Haitienne de l'Education Privée - the Haitian Foundation for Private Education). FONHEP is a distinguished long-standing Haitian NGO, originally launched in September 1988, with support from USAID. During the late 1980's and early 1990's, FONHEP played an important role in helping to strengthen the role of private schools in providing primary education in Haiti. Then, a USAID policy shift in the mid 1990's moved resources away from the private sector and back to the Ministry of Education. FONHEP'S level of USAID funding was cut back, and it lost many key staff.

*IEQ proposed providing technical assistance in classroom research design and data collection and analysis*

However, when IEQ began its work in 1998, a new USAID Mission Director was interested in trying to help FONHEP rebuild and sustain its capacity. The IEQ research project represented an opportunity that could help the Mission Director achieve this objective. Because FONHEP had somewhat limited expertise in carrying out qualitative classroom research, IEQ proposed providing FONHEP with technical assistance in classroom research design and data collection and analysis.



## RESEARCH DESIGN

In early 1998, a team of IEQII qualitative research specialists met with the Director and staff of FONHEP to design the research activity. The research design focused on examining conditions in 18 primary schools -- some public, some private -- in different locations throughout the country. The 18 schools were part of the USAID-sponsored Education 2004 Project - an effort to strengthen basic education in Haiti. USAID hoped that the IEQ study would also provide baseline data for Education 2004, a possibility that still exists (see Recommendations section).

FONHEP engaged a team of local Haitian researchers to implement the study. The team consisted of a member of FONHEP's evaluation unit, a University of Quiscaya professor of education, an independent psychologist, an independent educational anthropologist, a management and administration specialist and school director, and an experienced field researcher. Five of the six members of the research team were independent consultants with whom FONHEP had previously worked.

IEQ technical assistance experts collaborated with the FONHEP research team in the design and testing of research instruments. In March 1998, the local research team participated in two intensive weeks of IEQ methodological training, producing and piloting the research instruments and planning fieldwork.

*The local research team participated in two intensive weeks of IEQ methodological training, producing and piloting the research instruments and planning fieldwork*

The research methods proposed for the IEQ study included: classroom observations in second, fourth, and sixth grades in the 18 schools to gain insights into teaching and learning conditions; interviews with school directors, teachers, and parents to understand their perceptions on issues of education quality; assessment of student competencies in basic skills; and collection of basic school profile data.

Research instruments were developed collaboratively by local researchers and IEQ international consultants. A major focus of the instrument design process was to identify classroom practices that are unique to Haiti, and develop observational instruments that could help analyze the impact of such practices on teaching and learning. For example, a common classroom practice is the use by Haitian teachers of various forms of punishment and sanctions, as

well as praise, to motivate student learning behavior. Qualitative research instruments to measure the impact of such practices were developed by the IEQ research team, and then tested and refined in pilot research efforts in a small number of schools.

Training activities for members of the FONHEP research team involved a general introduction to qualitative research methods; guidance in qualitative research techniques such as: how to conduct participant observation activities; how to write running logs; how to take notes and analyze them; how to collect and analyze qualitative as well as quantitative data; and how to plan a field research activity (e.g. logistics, planning contacting people, gaining entry).

As team members were introduced to qualitative methodology and techniques, they worked on designing and refining instruments for data collection. For most members of the team, it was their first encounter with the concepts of qualitative classroom research or actual research in the field. In fact, many team members were surprised that they, not hired student surveyors, would be carrying out research themselves in the field.

## IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

*Telephone and mail service from the capital is almost non-existent, and roads to areas outside of Port-au-Prince are often impassable*

Research was carried out simultaneously in three geographical regions of Haiti. The team of six researchers divided into two sub-teams, one for classroom observations and teacher interviews and the other for parents and school director interviews. Because the school year was drawing to a close, the team was under considerable pressure to collect all its data in a very short time period. Haiti is plagued by poor communication systems: telephone and mail service from the capital is almost non-existent; and roads to areas outside of Port-au-Prince are often impassable even with all-terrain vehicles. Often the research teams arrived at schools unannounced and had to draw on all their communication skills to gain entry to carry out the research. The tense political situation made school directors wary and suspicious of outsiders in their communities. Most of the researchers had little experience sitting for long hours in hot classrooms, writing running logs and journals, and then spending long evenings in cramped quarters analyzing notes together by kerosene lantern to tease out emerging themes. Although the research design had included testing of students observed in mathematics and reading, unfortunately, testing was not fully carried out because of funding and logistical constraints.

As project data collection efforts concluded, FONHEP was facing a series of internal business and financial issues that forced it to curtail many of its efforts. This organizational crisis caused the process of the IEQ study data analysis to be postponed, which in turn led to the loss of many of the consultant researchers who needed to find other sources of work and remuneration.

Almost a year later, FONHEP resolved its internal issues, and was ready to tackle the data analysis part of the IEQ-supported research study. By that time, FONHEP lacked the internal staff data analysis capacity or access to the local IEQ project consultants who could carry out the analysis. In the end, IEQ needed to bring in a new external consultant to complete the data analysis process. Fortunately, the consultant, a Haitian specialist with excellent research skills, was able to work effectively with FONHEP to complete the study.

## RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The IEQ Haiti classroom research study yielded valuable insights regarding classroom conditions in Haitian primary schools. Topics addressed by the study included:

- Facilities in most of the 18 schools were not conducive to learning. The school environment often consisted of cramped classroom space, inadequate lighting, a lack of instructional materials, poor hygiene facilities, etc.
- Student discipline practices: In many classrooms, teachers employed traditional - sometimes abusive - methods to discipline unruly students, e.g. whipping them or making them kneel on a concrete floor. However, classes where teachers used active learning methods and where there was a high level of student participation, had fewer disciplinary problems.
- Learning through oral repetition emerged as a major instructional method. This method is usually criticized as ineffective in pedagogical literature. However, researchers believe that the extensive use of this method may be linked to the way in which information generally gets transmitted in oral cultures such as Haiti.

*Facilities in most of the schools studied were not conducive to learning*

- During the average school day, there are minimal amounts of time when students have real opportunities to learn. Much of the 5-hour school day consists of chaotic disorganized activity. Researchers observed that on average, only about 2 hours of every day provide students with focused opportunities to learn. These opportunities are often wasted because teachers seldom give students the opportunity to participate, ask questions, and learn by doing.
- Many parents believe that the primary purpose of school is to socialize their children and teach them good manners. They believe that the school should help their children learn to behave and be polite. This finding points to the need to do a great deal more to educate parents on the goals and objectives of schooling, of what their children are expected to learn, and about the characteristics of effective schools.
- The burden of success in school is seen to be on the child: If the student fails, it is perceived to be his or her fault, not the shared responsibility of the school, its teachers, or the students' parents. Thus, there is little or no recognition that if children are having difficulties, there may be a need to make adjustments in classroom practice or change the pattern of parental support.

*The IEQ research findings provide a long needed analysis of what goes on inside Haitian primary schools*

The IEQ research findings provide the Haitian educational community and international donors with a long needed analysis of what goes on inside Haitian primary schools. Because the results “speak the voice of the classroom”, because they document real experience, they provide an important opportunity to reflect on ways of improving primary school teaching and learning in Haiti.

#### **IMPACT OF THE STUDY**

The results of the IEQ classroom research study were shared at a national conference organized by FONHEP in March, 1999. The findings and methodology were presented by a panel of international and local researchers who worked on the study. The more than 300 hundred participants to the conference included many representatives of the Ministry of Education at the central, regional and departmental level, local researchers, representatives of the major universities in Haiti, as well as representatives of the major donor organizations in Haiti such as UNICEF, UNESCO, The World Bank, The

Interamerican Development Bank, and the French Cooperation Agency. Also, and most importantly, present at the national conference were the school directors directly involved in the study.

Practically all participants commended FONHEP and IEQII for the quality of study and the importance of its findings. However, recommendations on next steps focused less on the content of the research, and more on the related needs identified at the outset of this case study -- the need to build consensus on national education research priorities in Haiti, and the need to develop a broad-based public-private sector community of educational researchers.

Participants felt that the IEQ study suggested the need for more extensive research into the issues that the study addressed. However, in order for such research to have an impact, participants recommended the need for a broad-based consensus to be developed on national educational research priorities. Such a consensus could be facilitated by the Ministry of Education, based on consultation with leading educational researchers and decisionmakers.

Participants at the conference agreed to form an Educational Research Consultative Group that would work together to strengthen the capabilities of its members, exchange information, develop recommendations for a national research agenda, and share resources to carry out research studies. All of the local research organizations attending the conference, including the Ministry of Education, agreed to participate in the Consultation Group. The Group met periodically for several months after the conference. However, with further cutbacks in donor funding and new political difficulties in Haiti, the Group has ceased its activities.

*With funding cutbacks and political difficulties, the Educational Research Consultative Group has ceased its activities*

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

IEQ's work in Haiti sought to address the important need of collecting better information about conditions in Haitian classrooms. The project hypothesis was that a qualitative-based classroom research study, carried out by local researchers would (a) help inform education policy; and (b) help build educational research capacity in the country.

However, the project failed to fully achieve its objectives by not taking into account two important concerns.

- First, there was a need for IEQ to better understand Haiti's own national education policy research needs before launching its own project study. A new government had just come to power with a new reform-minded Minister of Education. Unfortunately, IEQ began its study without adequately exploring ways in which its research design could support the policy research needs of the new Ministry of Education (MOE). Consequently, the MOE had little sense of ownership of the study, and never made effective use of its findings.
- Second, project designers did not pay enough attention to what was involved in achieving the goal of building national research capacity. Not only the new government, but several universities and education sector NGOs had nascent educational research capabilities and a strong interest in applying their skills. Each had resources to contribute to the kind of classroom-based study that IEQ proposed to carry out.

*The absence of effective stakeholder dialogue at the beginning of the activity inhibited the impact on capacity building*

However, IEQ did not effectively engage these various educational research institutions in the design stages of the project. A decision was made by USAID to have one local institution – FONHEP - implement the study, and little effort was made to bring other key stakeholders into the process. The absence of effective stakeholder dialogue at the beginning of the IEQ activity constrained IEQ from having a greater impact on building the capacity of the Haitian research community.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Educational research efforts, such as the IEQ study in Haiti, need to be supported by effective working relationships between research organizations and educational policy and service delivery institutions. In the absence of such relationships, it is difficult to make effective use of research findings.

IEQ believes that improvements in educational quality are best achieved when the results of research into classroom practice are used to inform and shape public policy. This requires an environment where researchers understand the public policy agenda, and carry out studies that inform that agenda; and/or where decision-makers are willing to consider classroom research findings as a

means of improving educational policy. Such an environment did not exist in Haiti because of weak organizational relationships between the Haitian Ministry of Education and local research organizations. Consequently, the IEQ research findings were not utilized by policymakers in the MOE.

· The project demonstrated the value of using qualitative research methods, in countries such as Haiti, to gain valuable insights into classroom teaching and the learning environment.

Although poor educational conditions in many Haitian primary school classrooms have been observed by many international and local educators, the reasons for these conditions and their impact on learning had never been fully documented. Qualitative research offers countries an opportunity to identify specific constraints to educational quality at the school and classroom level; and then to advocate with government and the international donor community for ways in which education sector policies and resources can be used more effectively to improve classroom teaching and learning.

Insights learned from the IEQ Haiti classroom research study are still valid, and further efforts should be made to use them to inform educational policy in Haiti.

*The reasons for poor educational conditions in many Haitian primary schools had never been fully documented*

Today, two years after the completion of the IEQ study, Haiti has a new government, and a new Minister of Education. USAID and other donor organizations are in the process of developing new basic education projects. Since primary school classroom conditions have not changed a great deal, findings and recommendations of the IEQ study are as valid today as they were two years ago. Concerned institutions might be well served to review findings from the IEQ study to help inform the design of new educational policies and programs in Haiti.

For example, a new USAID-funded Haiti education sector project is considering carrying out a follow-up research effort to the IEQ study. This follow-up would assess changes that have occurred in classroom conditions in the 18 schools that were part of the IEQ study and also the recently completed USAID Education 2004 project. Such a follow-up activity would be one way of making greater use of the valuable information and findings of the original IEQ study.

# 4

# HONDURAS

## *Developing an Alternative Program for a Growing Out-of-School Population*

**IEQ/Honduras Team:** Carmen Siri – Coordinator; Vilma Ruth Mendéz; Juan Vicente Rodríguez and the curriculum writers; Rafael Díaz Donaire, Claudia Rodríguez, and the trainers and field staff; Esdra Zelaya, Roy Portillo, and the evaluators; Victor Armando Moncada, Sumaya Zúniga, Roberto García, and the audio team; Lidia Fromm Cea, María Eugenia Mondragón, and the English team; Felipe Rivera and the editing and design team; Rossana Garay; Sobeyda Álvarez; Carlos Cárdenas; Heather Simpson

**Institutions:** Educatodos

**Purpose:** To assist Honduran educators to improve access to middle school education system, particularly for rural areas to address the employment and social challenges which have worsened in the environment after Hurricane Mitch.



*Educatodos started in 1995 with the development of an education program for first to sixth grades. By the end of the year 2000, it had reached over 350,000 students.*

**T**he Improving Educational Quality project in Honduras is working alongside EDUCATODOS, the Honduran Ministry of Education's alternative delivery system, to develop a quality grade 7-9 curriculum for a growing, young, out-of-school population, piggybacking on their already successful effort for grades 1-6. This partnership aims at collaborating the efforts of a successful, far-reaching system of in-country education delivery to difficult to reach populations, and the experience of a decade-old worldwide program of improving educational quality.

Educatodos, the IEQ II partner in Honduras, is a well established and recognized alternative formal educational program aimed at providing quality education to youth and adults who, for a variety of reasons, have been excluded from the traditional school system. Educatodos started in 1995 with the development of an education program for first to sixth grades. By the end of the year 2000, the program had reached over 350,000 students. In 1998, Educatodos received the Merit Recognition of UNESCO Literacy Program. Its delivery system involves text and audio learning materials and volunteer facilitators that work in any available setting near the home or the workplace. It also works with the sponsorship of organizations such as private business, NGO's, local governments, or educational institutions.

Educatodos and IEQ II started working jointly in November 1999, through a USAID funded project for reconstruction after hurricane Mitch , developing curriculum materials for an alternative education delivery program for basic education of grades 7 to 9. The IEQ II project in Honduras involves technical assistance for curriculum design and development, in which an integrated approach is being used. Formative assessment is an essential element of quality in learning as well as quality in project development. Furthermore, IEQ II focuses on the expansion of Educatodos' network of stakeholders and on an institutional strengthening strategy.

*The joint activities began through a USAID-funded project for reconstruction after Hurricane Mitch*

## EDUCATING A GROWING, YOUNG, OUT-OF SCHOOL POPULATION

Honduras is faced with a growing young population with no access to formal schooling.

María is 18 and works as a seamstress in a maquila in San Pedro Sula. She was brought up by her grandmother, who also was a seamstress. María's dream was to continue her schooling beyond the traditional end-point of sixth grade. Nevertheless, she was not able to cover the costs of books, uniforms, and transportation to the inner city where the middle school is located. When the seventh-grade Educatodos program was announced to begin classes at the maquila where she works, María knew that this opportunity to study at her workplace would allow her to make her dream of continuing her education a reality. She told her grandmother that she was going to continue her studies to which her grandmother replied, "Ya ves que Dios escuchó tus ruegos."<sup>1</sup>

María's situation is similar to the cases of thousands of young women and men in Honduras, who have been frustrated in their efforts of completing their basic education due to the limited opportunities and lack of accessible programs.

Sixty three percent of the Honduran population is below the age of 25. Much of this young population is in rural areas and in the peripheries of urban areas. In Honduras education indicators are low, the average time spent in school being only 4.9 years. The formal education system cannot satisfy the demands of the growing population. The middle school has not grown at the pace primary school has. Thus, an increasing number of motivated teenagers are finishing primary school and trying to enter middle school, which cannot handle the needs of the population. Approximately, 65 of every 100 Hondurans do not have access to middle school. Of the 35 Hondurans who do have the fortune of attending middle school, only 15 are in public schools, while 20 attend private schools. In total, more than 1,600,000 Hondurans between the age 12 and 30 have not completed their basic education. Official estimates indicate that many decades will be required to effectively expand middle school in order to provide schooling to the growing young population.

*More than 1.6 million Hondurans between ages 12 and 30 have not completed their basic education*

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<sup>1</sup> "You see, God heard your prayers."

Finishing the 6th grade in Honduras is considered a major accomplishment by most of the population. The members of the select group who reach this milestone often soon discover that a 6th grade education is not adequate to ensure their entry into a work place which would allow them to sustain or improve their living conditions. When they try to return to school to complete a basic education up to 9th grade, many are faced with the increasing costs of entering a private school or of traveling long distances to a public middle school. Most people, unable to overcome these constraints, start working with skills that do not go beyond basic literacy and math. At stake is a generation of young people, who are vulnerable in the years before adulthood, and who enter their adult life without appropriate skills to increase their country's development or their own quality of life.

### *Closing the Gap between What Is Said and What Is Done*

In a country like Honduras with pressing needs, and limited opportunities for education and employment, under-educated youth are at a distinct disadvantage when competing for resources and opportunities that could improve the quality of their lives. To complicate this situation, in 1999 Hurricane Mitch severely affected the education system by destroying much of the physical infrastructure of the public school system in many regions of the country. In many areas, children were left without access to schools.

Within weeks after the hurricane, the Honduran educational community decided to not only reconstruct the physical damages caused by the hurricane, but also initiate an educational transformation responding to the needs of society. Civil society groups began pressing for changes in education that would help Honduras join a globalized society, while at the same time addressing the needs of children and youth who were particularly vulnerable in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch.<sup>2</sup>

Educadores effectively responded to this challenge by initiating, in partnership with IEQ II, the third cycle of basic education (7th to 9th grades). The project established an alternative education program to allow excluded

*Hurricane Mitch destroyed much of the physical infrastructure of the public school system*

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<sup>2</sup> FONAC (Foro Nacional de Convergencia), a national forum, gave priority to educational change and developed a proposal calling for educational transformation based on a national assessment of needs.

youth to continue or pursue their basic education. Educatodos has a program that factors in several elements that make it attractive to youth and young adults:

*Many factors  
of Educatodos  
make it an  
attractive  
program for  
youth and  
young adults*

- The classroom is closer to the learner, in factories and other workplaces, in community centers, peoples' homes, or whatever locale available in the community.
- Quality learning is provided through a curriculum that is integrated, focused on development needs and on activities that are relevant to young people and their communities.
- Meeting times are flexible, which allows participants to schedule their studies around work and family obligations.
- Class settings are adapted to the learners' conditions, for example mothers can bring young children to class when child-care is not available, and there is no age restriction.
- Costs are lower, by avoiding transportation costs, uniforms, and school fees.
- The school program is continuous, allowing three years of study to be condensed into two.

Due to the above characteristics of the program, Educatodos has the potential to effectively reach the population excluded by the traditional school system. In 2002, the 7th through 9th grade Educatodos program is being piloted in more than 250 sites. Approximately 3,000 persons graduated from 7th grade in 2001 through this pilot program. Considering the success of Educatodos' Grades 1-6 program, which has had close to 90,000 participants in 2001, the 7 to 9 program – given sufficient funding – could reach a similar number in the next few years. An expansion of this scale would increase the current national enrollment to over 53% for grades 7 to 9 (considerably above the 35% current enrollment). Given that the Government of Honduras has established as a goal that middle school coverage will reach 70% of the school age population in the year 2015, the expansion of Educatodos can significantly assist in attaining this goal.

## *Building Community Leadership through Volunteerism*

Reyna lives in the southern part of Honduras, on the outskirts of Choluteca, in a community that in the aftermath of hurricane Mitch served as a refuge for neighboring communities. At that devastating time, Reyna sheltered several families in her rural home, feeding all of them with her family's stored maize for tortillas. Although, she has not finished high school, Reyna has been teaching for 6 years with the Educadores 1st to 6th grade program. When the 7th grade program started she immediately signed up as a volunteer facilitator and now has 25 regular participants in 7th grade. With the use of audio and text English language materials, Reyna is learning English together with the youth in the program she facilitates. In addition to the volunteer work she does with Educadores, she has been contracted to work in the local pre-school. The number of hours she has put into the educational development of her community are countless and invaluable. If she were paid as a 7th grade teacher this year, she would have earned close to \$600. This is her personal contribution to the education of her community. Reyna is now recognized as a highly regarded leader in her rural town.

Educadores relies on the desire and capacity of individuals to voluntarily serve others, which is particularly strong in Honduras. It builds upon a legion of volunteers working with communities to improve the conditions of education. These individuals take between one and three hours a day to work with groups of young people creating the conditions and organizing the setting for learning. Facilitators organize groups, assist in the organization of projects related to the curriculum, and apply the evaluation procedures established with the Ministry of Education. Aided by text and audio materials they can steer quality instruction for small groups of learners, even in subjects like English, which they mostly do not speak.

*The program builds upon a legion of volunteers working with communities to improve the conditions of education*

Although approximately half of 7th grade facilitators are teachers by training, people of many other backgrounds are present: university students, accountants, secretaries, market vendors, unemployed persons, and even prison guards and prisoners.

In the six years of its existence, Educadores has grown and now has more than 4,000 volunteers facilitating learning sessions in grades 1 to 6. This experience was the foundation for the new program. The 7th to 9th grade program requires that the facilitators be able to guide participants in acquiring

more complex competencies. Therefore, a new criterion for facilitator selection was established. Facilitators should have at least a high-school diploma or the equivalent. They should live in the community or be a member of the workplace where an Educатodos center has been established. Although they are not paid by Educатodos, some communities or groups of learners have decided to pay a minimal stipend to cover transportation or other costs. Often, a local partner organization will pay for their activities. Nevertheless, in most cases, their actions respond only to the encouragement of others in the community or are the result of their own, personal commitment. To assist facilitators with their new responsibilities, IEQII has provided training strategies, materials, and methodologies.

Departmental coordinators and municipal promoters are responsible for establishing the centers, and for overseeing appropriate evaluation procedures, which requires constant interaction with the facilitators. Thus, training Educатodos departmental coordinators and municipal promoters, who work with the facilitators, has been a part of IEQII's institutional strengthening strategy.

*Educатodos  
does not  
count on a  
paid work  
force like the  
traditional  
school  
structure does*

Volunteerism plays an essential role in an alternative education delivery system like Educатodos, which does not count with a paid workforce like the traditional school structure. Volunteers serve as role models for other members in the community, including the young people who are coming through the program and who frequently become facilitators of future programs. There are indications that not only participants benefit from their involvement with Educатodos, but that the program has also had an impact on the facilitators, who gain knowledge and leadership skills through their actions.

IEQII is conducting a study in order to better understand the nature of volunteerism in education in Honduras. The purpose is to document the impact of the program on facilitators, and to understand the conditions that facilitate and inhibit their involvement.

## A CASE OF QUALITY: SUCCESS IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

Dina is a bright teenager of a rural town near the lake of Yohoa. She had stopped her studies a couple of years ago after 6th grade and was at home helping her mother. Her family cannot pay the costs of traditional middle school, even though they are barely \$50 for the year. However, in 2000, she started 7<sup>th</sup> grade with the Educadodos program. When IEQ program officers visited her toward the end of her school year, Dina greeted them in English, and could understand the translation being done for the foreign visitors. Going above and beyond just her own studies, she replaced the facilitator of the other 7th grade, who was absent due to illness. With a girl friend, Dina proudly told the visitors that what they were learning was better than what was taught at school, due to the fact that the Educadodos books talk about up to date topics that are interesting and useful. They found that the school uses antiquated books. Now, Dina says she wants to be a teacher.

Quality education for anyone is learning what is useful for improving one's life. This is more easily said than planned. There is a constant battle concerning paradigms of what should be taught. Thus, in IEQ, quality in education is considered more of a process than in a fixed goal, and does not have an endpoint. It is more like a path – with iterative assessments and decision-making, leading to efficient and effective processes that provide relevant learning for a specific population.

*There is a constant battle concerning paradigms of what should be taught*

In the collaboration between IEQ II and Educadodos, a pointed reality has emerged: in Honduras, quality learning, involves the achievement of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for improving the life of young people. The goal of IEQ II and Educadodos has been to produce quality curriculum and materials that assist young Hondurans acquire basic knowledge and competencies that improve their quality of life. Ensuring the acquisition of this knowledge and skill-base, and further, securing the improvement in quality of life that these competencies should yield requires constant assessment. Throughout the process of striving for quality, the IEQ and Educadodos team continuously asks: what is yielding concrete, positive results? What can be done in order to continue attaining these quality results? The team has, as such, been confronted with the challenge of building-in assessment as part of the curriculum development scheme, and thus into the process of developing overall quality.



## BUILDING QUALITY THROUGH ASSESSMENT

*Informed decisions are made within the context of continuous field assessment*

Assessment for quality requires the development of systematic processes that can be applied and validated. This leads to understanding what works and what does not. How has quality learning been achieved in a particular instance? Could that approach be applied in other cases? Several assessment procedures were developed and established to assist in moving progressively nearer to the goal of increasing the quality of the program. Feedback and information drawn from evaluations of learning are used in order to make adjustments to the materials. Decisions affecting the curriculum materials are not made based solely on professional judgment; rather, informed decisions are made within the context of continuous field assessment.

The following assessment procedures are currently being employed, to construct learning in a challenging environment. A baseline study of all participants entering the 7th grade program was done in order to identify the basic skill-level of the participants. This study was key in order to determine objectives and develop remedial lessons. These lessons are particularly useful for new participants entering into the 7th grade program, taking into consideration that most of them have been out of school for several years. An assessment was also done on the entry-level skills of the facilitators. This assessment identified content areas requiring special attention for training facilitators. Entry-level and pre and post-tests have been developed for 7th grade learning achievement, the first for this grade-level in Honduras. Regular assessment sessions and quizzes at the end of each activity, unit and theme-block are incorporated into the materials package, and facilitators-guides assist facilitators in how to provide correct feedback to the participants. These continuous self-assessment exercises, allow the learner to confirm and fortify their learning.

The Educadores/IEQ curriculum is integrated, and includes activities specifically pertinent to the lives and interests of the participants. This is a different approach towards curriculum than previously managed in Honduras, which builds its curriculum around subject areas. Different assessment procedures for certification and contextual testing were needed. A continuous evaluation of learning was desired. Thus, facilitators had to be trained in the application of these evaluation processes and the capacity for creating tests had to be strengthened. Furthermore, all of the above instruments were designed



and adjusted based on field-testing, which is the most valuable source of information for building the evaluation system.

In another sphere, the design processes also had to be checked for quality, which lead to another area for assessment. The Project was conceived as a learning environment, in which development processes are tested, analyzed, and improved, applying formative assessment procedures, participatory decision-making, and attaching importance to knowledge gained through field-level experience. For example, learning materials testing has been conducted by multi-disciplinary teams in the field resulting in better understanding of the characteristics of the population, the conditions under which the program is developed, leading to informed decision-making regarding improving the materials. A baseline study of socio-economic conditions of participants and facilitators has been undertaken, which is used to inform the staff on specific challenges of implementation with different groups of the population. Assessment of management and administrative procedures involving the work plan review has assisted in streamlining and adjusting the process. The assessment of the status and conditions of relationships among private business, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders, as well as the effect of enhanced education efforts in the workplace is to be of particular consideration for the sustainability of the program. Assessing the social surroundings, support for, and training needs of the volunteer facilitators has been essential in determining the optimal conditions for these surrogate teachers' continuity and positive performance.

As the organizational environment changes, the project has had to reassess the capacity building process – through both formal and informal procedures – refining its focus and making adjustments. Monitoring has been used for supervising the needs of pilot centers, which assists with informed decisionmaking at a project management level. Likewise, evaluation procedures themselves are also assessed for the quality of results they are yielding, particularly in the case of the formative evaluation procedures.

## **BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY**

Usually programs developed with external funding have a limited period of existence that is defined more by the availability of funding than by the quality of the product or the impact of the program. It is usually assumed that

*Usually programs developed with external funding have a limited period of existence*

the government will continue the program with national funds, after the high-cost development period has been completed. The latter assumption has not been the usual pattern in Honduras, where projects tend to cease to exist once foreign funds are no longer available. With regards to Educadores, the external resources will probably drop off in the coming years. As a consequence, effectively dealing with the issue of sustainability is crucial to the survival of the program.

Sustainability of an educational program first and foremost is dependent on its technical and management performance and credibility. Furthermore, sustainability is particularly dependent on the continued capacity to link to the environment, to respond to the emerging needs of the population, as well as the capacity to define internal strategies for securing resources.

*Sustainability is seen as a process, in which the organization progressively develops an internal capacity to respond to the needs of the environment*

Soon after the start of the IEQ project in Honduras, the issue of sustainability of the program became an area of concern. What should be done in order to ensure that Educadores maintains and expands the program after USAID funding is no longer available? Before the end of the first year, the Steering Committee, and the Minister of Education himself, recommended that IEQ look into a sustainability strategy with Educadores. The strategy proposed involves action on several arenas: (a) a strategic re-definition of the Educadores mission and vision, (b) an improved capacity to build alliances with national and local stakeholders and organizations, (c) institutional strengthening and organizational restructuring, which includes the capacity for seeking and managing financial resources. The sustainability strategy is being implemented through ongoing actions within Educadores. Sustainability is hence seen as a process, in which the organization progressively develops an internal capacity to link and respond to the needs of the environment while maintaining standards of performance.

### **INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING**

The first step of the IEQ project was to identify strengths and areas that requiring internal strengthening for building the future. Workshops were held with Educadores departmental coordinators and headquarters coordinators to assess their vision of Educadores after six years of operation, in regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. Key program coordinators created a working group, which identified institutional strengthening needs in a self-assessment session. The main areas needing attention for institutional

strengthening identified by the group were (a) institutional direction and vision, (b) field operations, and (c) internal systems.

To address these priority areas, specific actions have been taken.

In order to better define institutional direction and vision, the Educatodos team underwent a participatory strategic planning process. This will be discussed in detail below.

For strengthening field operations, the team's actions included:

- Holding workshops with Departmental Coordinators, to help them better understand their functions and outreach operations.
- Establishing the office of the Field Operations Coordinator within Educatodos.
- Improving the organization of information management and providing Internet access for departmental offices.

For strengthening internal systems, the team's actions involved capacity building and technical assistance in the following areas:

- Administration of the production of publications and audio learning materials.
- Administrative procedures and staffing needs.
- Testing and evaluation processes.
- Development and tryout of training methodologies.
- Computer network and integrated information systems.
- Proposal development and identification of funding sources.
- Communication strategies with the educational community in Honduras.

*The team's strategic planning addressed ways to strengthen field operations and internal systems*

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

Strategic planning at Educatodos has not been a one-time effort. Strategic planning has been a process that has been constructed from within the organization, and in interaction with national stakeholders. Defining a strategic direction. Strategic planning has involved the staff and management of Educatodos in a reflection concerning the focus of the institution, in relation to the needs and alternative route. The Steering Committee of the IEQII Project was consulted through a workshop, as were key Honduran stakeholders. Headquarters staff and field office staff were brought together in various sessions to participate in the definition of the strategic direction and to review different versions of the plan. The team defined a work plan for implementation of the strategic plan and created a project matrix for assisting Educatodos in establishing priorities for its new projects and requests for funding.

In line with the vision and mission set forth on the following page, the base has been established for defining a new institutional structure, to be implemented throughout 2002.

# Vision & Mission of Educatodos

## **Vision**

Acompañamos a la población hondureña deseosa de superarse y excluida del sistema escolarizado, en la mejora de su educación y de sus condiciones de vida, mediante un modelo alternativo de educación de calidad.

## **Mission**

Somos una organización educativa exitosa al servicio del desarrollo integral de la población hondureña deseosa de superarse, excluida del sistema escolarizado. Ofrecemos oportunidades de educación básica formal de calidad por medios alternativos a la población de jóvenes y adultos que se encuentran fuera del sistema escolarizado, contribuyendo a elevar significativamente el nivel de escolaridad de los hondureños. Atendemos además necesidades educativas y de desarrollo de la población joven del país (entre 13 y 35 años), detectadas por los propios jóvenes, mediante el diseño y operacionalización de programas específicos de educación permanente. Acompañamos a los participantes de nuestros programas para que se motiven a ser gestores de su propio desarrollo, para que construyan aprendizajes pertinentes y significativos y para que hagan uso de esos aprendizajes en la mejora de su calidad de vida, en la elevación de su nivel de auto-estima, en el aprovechamiento de las posibilidades que le ofrece su entorno y en el acceso a otros niveles de educación formal. Trabajamos en alianza con personas naturales y jurídicas comprometidas con el desarrollo de Honduras, favoreciendo sinergias que benefician a nuestros participantes y sus comunidades. Somos una institución con proyección nacional e internacional, conformada por un equipo con compromiso humano, cumplidor de metas, innovador, que disfruta del trabajo que realiza y orgulloso del impacto que produce en el desarrollo del país.

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR EFFECTIVE ACTION

Teresa works in the pastry shop of a major Hotel in San Pedro Sula. She enrolled in 7th grade in the Educатodos program. Tourists have always liked to talk to her, asking about Honduras and sites to visit, but she used to be shy because she could not speak English. Teresa says that now, with the Educатodos program, she is not only learning more about Honduran culture, history and points of interest, but she is also learning English. Now, when tourists come to the hotel she is proud to be able to speak with them in English. The head of Human Resources at the hotel is also pleased. She has noted an increase in self-esteem and quality of service in those employees who are part of the Educатodos 7th grade program. She is looking forward to starting a new 7th grade group next year.

Organizations function and survive if they avoid working in isolation. They are more effective when they link with other organizations. Educатodos is a good example of an organization forming effective partnerships with other organizations. As an alternative educational program, which does not count with physical infrastructure for its learning centers nor a large cadre of teachers, Educатodos must enter into alliances at all levels in order to deliver its program in the field. Fortunately, this has been part of the Educатodos strategy from the onset, as co-financing and co-ownership of the centers at field level is essential to the Educатodos sustainability strategy. Building on this experience, IEQ II has assisted Educатodos to further strengthen and expand its network of national alliances with private business, NGOs, local government and other educational organizations such as vocational centers.

At the local level, building partnerships is essential. Without the benefit of a school structure, sustainability is best achieved if a strong alliance is achieved with a leader or organization already working in the community. Educатodos has been successful in linking with local leaders, community organizations, women organizations, NGO's, religious organizations, as well as private business.

The interest of private business in establishing partnerships with Educатodos is particularly outstanding. In Honduras, the demand for quality education is expressed by civil society organizations and private business councils. Private businesses face the challenge presented by a population with limited education and are therefore interested in improving the education of

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their labor force. These companies have recognized that better education leads to better performance in the work place. Also, improved educational benefits for the staff give them an edge on international competition of their companies. Thus, some have looked to Educatodos as an educational system that can come into the workplace and adapt to the time constraints and needs of their workers. Educatodos has started to intensify its interaction with the industrial zones or maquilas in the promotion of 7th grade. This level of schooling is of particular interest to workers in the maquilas who have to have at least a 6th grade education in order to work there. Promotion of Educatodos with private business has been made easy: It constitutes entry into a partnership with a successful program that features flexibility, visible results, and a record of improving staff skills and attitudes. As one manager of a large maquilage in San Pedro Sula expressed: “Educatodos is a win-win situation.”

*Some have looked to Educatodos as an educational system that can come into the workplace and adapt to the time constraints and needs of their workers*

IEQII has been fortunate to work together with a very active Steering Committee, that has helped keep the linkages with the external environment, and which has provided strategic orientation to the 7th to 9th grade program of Educatodos. This Steering Committee now works on commissions in order to promote actions in support of Educatodos sustainability, the positioning of Educatodos in national forums of decision-makers, and the development of a law that will establish Educatodos as a semi-autonomous center, with much more independence and possibility of assisting the country's out-of-school population in a sustainable way.

The case of Educatodos is one that brings into effect the principle that education is the responsibility of all. It has the potential to provide a quality education to hundreds of thousands of out-of-school youth, that otherwise will not conclude their basic education. Government, private business, local organizations, and private individuals come together in a synchronic arrangement that brings out the best in all, and that, in simple terms, works.

# 5

# JAMAICA

## *Modernizing Teacher Education Through Curricular Change*

**IEQ/Jamaica Team:** Errol Miller – Professor & Chair, Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE); Marcia Stewart – Secretary to the JBTE; Lorna Fraser – Coordinator; Joy Duplessis; LANGUAGE ARTS: Clement Lambert (lead author); Zoe Bernard, Cora Cox, Daphine Simon, Maureen Byfield. MATHEMATICS: Ceva McPherson-Kerr, Cynthia Cooke, Rosalyn Kelly, Derrick Hall. SCIENCE: Marceline Figueroa, Winston Forrest, Sherril Gardner, Grace Samuels. SOCIAL STUDIES: Allison McCallum, Vileitha Davis-Morrison, Cherry Davis, Norma Williams.

**Institution:** Joint Board of Teacher Education (participating colleges – Sam Sharpe Teachers' College, Bethlehem Moravian College, St. Joseph's Teachers' College, Mico Evening College, Moneague College, College of Agriculture, Science and Education)

**Purpose:** To create the tools for building skills and knowledge among pre-service teachers that will allow them to successfully utilize the new primary school curriculum currently being implemented in Jamaican schools.



*Can a new curriculum be implemented in tandem with an entirely different set of requirements for the professional preparation of teachers? This is the challenge for Jamaica's education reforms.*

Jamaica is in the midst of transforming its primary school curriculum to include innovative, participatory activities in which teachers orchestrate students to do creative work, rather than direct passive learners. This change is significant not only for the remarkable changes it promises for children, but also because such an approach requires that teachers be trained very differently.

Innovations in education normally emerge from a pedagogical or ideological shift or simply reflect the need to align programs with current trends in education. The Jamaican situation described in this case study is more closely linked to the latter. However, in the curriculum revision experience described in this document, an inextricable link is identified between aligning programs with current trends and the influence this process has on the pedagogies and ideologies espoused by the participants in this venture. This chapter charts the journey of partners along the path to achieving quality education – a path that has involved the revision of selected teacher education courses in the Jamaican primary teacher education program. The story of the IEQII/Jamaica project unfolds through a process of interviews, document analysis and reflection.

## **HOW IT ALL STARTED**

The call for curriculum revision in Jamaican primary schools was formally documented in 1996 when the results of an island wide curriculum study (commissioned by the Jamaican Government) were shared with education stakeholders. The study was done by consultants within the Curriculum Evaluation Unit of the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP-2) in collaboration with officers from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOE&C) Core Curriculum Unit (Bailey, Brown & Löfgren 1996). Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and analysis, the study concluded, “When it comes to quality of education and especially teacher competence and traditional learning methods the whole

*Innovations reflect the need to align teacher education with current trends in education*

perspective must be changed.” These proposed changes included improvement in:

1. teacher assessment competencies;
2. classroom interaction styles; and
3. diagnosis of children’s competencies

*Broad changes in curricular affairs depend upon a modernized teaching culture*

Another significant component of the study grew out of the suggestion that the existing primary curriculum (Grades 1-6) needed “broad and detailed revisions” in order to reflect the stated needs of the respondents. The study also advocated that this curriculum should accommodate a “disciplinary approach within classes as well as an interdisciplinary approach between classes and/or grades) ...in addition it should be designed to accommodate differences in children’s background and experiences.”

The study recommended broad changes in the curricular affairs of Jamaican primary schools with the hope of influencing the teaching culture within these schools.

Subsequent to this study, the Ministry revised the Jamaican National Primary School Curriculum, with changes increasing in magnitude as the process unfolded. Members of the Core Curriculum Unit developed “A Revised National Primary Curriculum” in consultation with the different spheres of influence – including parents and children. This unit has as its mission “to design, develop and review curricula and essential curriculum support material, which form the basis for quality primary and secondary education.”

These curriculum documents are intended to ensure that “pupils develop the skills and competencies needed for personal achievement and creative and productive citizenship.” (MOE&C, 2001)

The national primary curriculum guide espouses a perspective that is “different in format and design from its predecessor,” which dated from 1978. Grades 1-3 are fully integrated using the overarching theme of “Me and My Environment.” At Grades 4-6, the format changes to discrete disciplines, with thematic integration across and within subject areas to be encouraged in the pupils’ project and research work (Revised Primary Curriculum, 1999, Grade 6, page ix).

Reform in the assessment policies and processes in Jamaica took place concurrently with the revision of the National Primary Curriculum. Indeed, the curriculum study lent further support for the notion of revisiting assessment policies and practices (Bailey, Brown & Löfgren 1996). With the support of the PEIP II, the student assessment unit of the Ministry of Education & Culture started a National Assessment Program to carry out the Unit's mandate "to create and implement a system for fair and developmental educational assessment of students at the primary and secondary levels and to monitor the assessment process at other levels of the system to ensure the most equitable distribution of educational opportunities for personal and national development" (MOE&C, 2001).

With the awareness of the global call for more learner friendly assessment practices, the new curriculum embraces the notion of alternative modes assessment, which "includes the use of portfolios and the keeping of Journals ... strategies are intimately linked to the focus questions objectives, activities, as product or performance, that is, what pupils can do to show that they have achieved the objectives" (MOE&C, p. vii).

*The new curriculum embraces the notion of alternative modes assessment*

### *New Teacher Feedback*

In a study on "making the transition for college to classroom" Evans (1997) suggests that there is continuity between what is learned in college and what graduates do in the Jamaican classroom. "The experience of teaching practice and lesson plan notes facilitate this continuity" (p. 83). However, research also revealed that new teachers often had difficulty in their initial efforts to translate what they had learned in college to classroom practice. Feedback from teachers suggests that college courses need to increase their relevancy and currency, while equipping the student teachers with specific exemplars of classroom practice. The revision of the teacher education program becomes more relevant in this context since there are implications for classroom practice.

### *Significant Gaps in Content, Methodology and Assessment*

The gaps between the preparation prospective teachers receive in Jamaican teachers colleges and expectations of them in the primary classroom have been well documented (e.g., Jennings, 2000). In her study, Jennings

highlighted the need for teacher training institutions to “interface with planning/policy and curriculum development units” to “ensure the relevance of the content of the training programs to the needs of the school system.”

In addition, an informal survey conducted in the IEQ/Jamaica project revealed that student teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the existing assessment process in the teachers colleges. The program was described as being excessively oriented to examinations, leaving out the alternative modes of assessment that should be employed. “One of the most pressing assessment concerns among the student teachers and the teacher educators we talked to was the influence exam pressure has on teaching and learning. This was perhaps the single most powerful factor in the implementation of classroom assessment.” (Fraser, Duplessis & Thomas 2000, p. 3).

The consideration of these gaps between training and the reality of the classroom informed many aspects of the revision of the teachers college curriculum. As described below, emphasis on assessment and the use of the National Primary Curriculum served as a focal point for the revision process.

### **FORGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE PROCESS**

*The working partnership involves people critical to the task of preparing teachers*

As described in the Prologue to this case study anthology, the IEQ process follows the principle of deliberately shifting “from technical support to partnership and ownership.” The Jamaican process of revising the teacher education program is based on this collaborative approach. The IEQ and Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) working partnership involves people who are critical to the task of preparing teachers. The IEQ, with personnel who have participated in initiatives for improving the quality of education worldwide, was charged with providing technical partnership. Local expertise assembled by the JBTE assumed responsibility for the curriculum revision and implementation process. While the operation of IEQ has been articulated elsewhere in the literature, it is necessary to describe the workings of the JBTE. In Jamaica, teacher certification is centrally monitored and administered by the Joint Board, an organization formed in 1965 by the Ministries of Education in the Bahamas, Belize and Jamaica. The Joint Board is based on a partnership between the teacher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, the teachers’ organizations, and the University of the West Indies (UWI). Miller (2001), who explains that the JBTE was established to take teacher preparation out of direct

control of government, describes the roles in this partnership as highly interactive:

- The University of the West Indies (which houses the offices of the JBTE) keeps partners working together;
- the Ministry of Education is responsible for policymaking – including national curricular decisions;
- the teachers' organizations are concerned with the adequate preparation of their prospective members; and
- the colleges implement the training of teachers.

Within the JBTE, Boards of Studies have responsibility for curriculum development. The Joint Board Secretariat has responsibility for implementation and monitoring. Therefore, curriculum revision entails a separate process where the Boards of Studies examine the existing curriculum, deliberate, and recommend adjustments. Insofar as the examining body has responsibility to see that the curriculum is relevant, the Joint Board Secretariat also ensures that appropriate reviews periodically take place.

The partnership espoused by the IEQ is evident in the Jamaican venture. With the emphasis on strengthening the instructional competencies of teacher educators in their preparation of teachers, the partnership was forged to realize the following outcomes:

- Developing revised curricula in selected areas;
- Improving assessment techniques through technical support;
- Producing student teachers who are adequately prepared to implement the National Primary Curriculum;
- Improving the quality of teaching, and;
- Ultimately, improving literacy and numeracy among primary school children.

*The partnership emphasizes the instructional competencies of teacher educators in their preparation of teachers*

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

Based on the available resources, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in consultation with the partners, funded four areas for review: **Science, Mathematics, Language Arts, and Social Studies**. After establishing the partnerships, the next major step was to identify the project coordinator, a person who had participated in the revision of the national primary curriculum and had experience working in the Ministry of Education. The role of the coordinator is pivotal in the project since she forms a link among all the partners in the project.

*The revision of teacher preparation stems from reforms in curriculum and assessment*

The coordinator of the project activities is charged with arranging the workshops, holding discussions with the chair of the JBTE, and keeping in close touch with the IEQ project director at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the local officer for USAID. Coming from the Ministry of Education's Core Curriculum Unit, which is responsible for revising the primary curriculum now being implemented in the schools, the coordinator brings continuity to the task. Indeed, the revision of the Joint Board's teacher preparation program began because of the dual reforms taking place with respect to the curriculum and in assessment.

After its selection of a project coordinator, the next step for the IEQ/Jamaica team was to identify subject area teams, making sure that there was a balance among the three stakeholders integral to the process. These were small teams comprised of MOE&C curriculum personnel, college personnel, and staff of the Institute of Education (IOE), which is the teacher education and educational research department of the University of the West Indies.

Among the responsibilities of the faculty members of the Institute is to provide leadership on issues related to teacher education in each area of specialization. As teams formed to set criteria for institutional affiliation, the selection efforts worked to ensure flexible, broad minded approaches by involving three partners in the writing process and at least four writers on each team. This flexibility in selection was further enhanced by the designation of team members in consultation with their supervisors and eminent members in each area of specialization. One respondent expressed the view that "we have put together the best persons for the task."

**Table 1.** Professional Affiliation of Curriculum Reviewers

<b><u>Subject</u></b>	<b><u>MOE&amp;C</u></b>	<b><u>Teachers' College</u></b>	<b><u>University (External)</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Language Arts	2	2	1	5
Mathematics	2	1	1	4
Science	2	1	1	4
Social Studies	1	2	2	5
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>

In fulfillment of the partnership roles, a team from the IEQ visited Jamaica and held meetings with key players in the process. These meetings included college principals, the project coordinator, and members of the Joint Board Secretariat. The meetings served to publicize the project and share the tenets of the IEQ as well as to acquaint the partners with an outline of the procedural guidelines for the life of the project. An official launch later provided another opportunity for publicly sharing information on the project. Different stakeholders participated in the exercises, which set a tone of positive, systemic reform for the ensuing activities.

*Meetings served to publicly share the tenets ... and set a tone of positive, systemic reform*

## **IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS**

The needs for successfully engaging in the curriculum review process may be divided into two categories. First, the team members identified technological needs that would facilitate online collaboration. To address these needs, the project hosted a series of training activities that familiarized members with the operation of the Virtual-U Web-based communication tool. During the training sessions the team discovered that participants had varying degrees of computer literacy. While some members were proficient with basic computer applications (e.g., word processing, e-mail, and the Internet) others were using the computer for the first time. Another finding was that some participants did not own a computer and this reality limited the avenues for practicing what was shared in these sessions.

*The team used the workshop to chart the direction for the curriculum writing process*

While the first category of needs addressed the technical competencies of the team members, the second category addressed curricular issues. At the first major meeting of the team, participants joined in an analysis by looking at the existing JBTE syllabuses, the new primary curriculum being implemented in Jamaica assessing the demands of the new program on the teacher preparation process, the shortcomings in the JBTE program, and important needs to be addressed. The team used this major workshop to chart the direction for the curriculum writing process, sharing the findings with lecturers in their respective boards of studies for their feedback. Some of the major findings of the curriculum reviewers were that:

1. The content of courses needed to be more closely aligned to that of the national primary curriculum
2. Content, materials and methodologies in the existing documents were outmoded and needed urgent updating.
3. There were significant gaps between the teachers college curriculum and the realities of the Jamaican primary schools.

According to a team member in the analysis process:

“The existing college curricula are dated ... because learning needs constant updating and reviewing and there are some crucial weaknesses in the existing program – some missing areas that really jumped at you. One could look at those missing areas. There was more of theory to it and less of hands-on in our own cultural context ... bearing in mind the weaknesses of the students. That is what the teacher needs to go out there and address, taking the students through a process of development.”

The team also was able to prioritize the assessment needs in colleges in this process. An IEQ team including technical personnel and local expertise visited the participating teachers colleges and collected data to ascertain the levels of support needed by these colleges to implement classroom assessment that would be consistent with the revised college curriculum. The following recommendations emerged from the assessment:



1. A more detailed analysis of the JBTE examination program is needed to ensure consistency with the goals of the primary training colleges.
2. Support for change should be provided by:
  - a. reducing structural constraints to implementing effective classroom assessment.
  - b. reducing professional constraints to implementing effective classroom assessment.
  - c. development of college level assessment policies.
  - d. increasing student teacher participation in assessment.
  - e. fostering professional development through research and professional change at the college, national and international levels.

*A more detailed analysis of the examination program is needed*

Technical partnership is also evidenced in the participation of IEQ personnel at revision workshops, teacher educator professional development sessions and regular dialogue through conference calls between the partners.

## **PREPARING THE CURRICULUM**

Using the findings of the needs assessment as a guide, the subject teams began the curriculum writing process. The process, as summarized by one participant, included “writing of a first draft and then moving into further adjustments based on the responses of lecturers in the teachers colleges and then further writing on the syllabus, updating, and, finally, an external review.”

Ensuring quality through the collaborative input of stakeholders was a main feature of the writing process. The Joint Board of Teacher Education through its professional development fora provided avenues for college lecturer feedback. The whole process of curriculum development in the Joint Board is a collaborative writing situation where boards of studies have input. At different stages of the writing process the emerging curriculum documents were

presented as works in progress for feedback from partners in the teachers colleges.

### *The Writing Process*

The kinds of interaction that took place during the writing process may be categorized as collaborative and consultative modes. The collaborative modes of writing occurred within subject teams where team members worked together to design/select appropriate content and methodologies for the revised courses. This process was configured in different ways that matched the working styles of the groups. For example, team members sometimes individually worked on units, shared these units with the team and then received suggestions for refinement. In other cases teams wrote units together during group sessions.

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other  
subject  
areas

In addition to the intra-team collaboration there were several inter-team collaborative sessions that were conducted both formally and informally. These sessions would be conducted formally at writing workshop sessions where whole group sessions were held. In these sessions subject teams gave progress reports, shared the kinds of challenges they faced and invited suggestions from other team members. The informal sessions occurred more frequently where subject team members often invited input from experts in other subject areas. This kind of interaction occurred during workshops and through telephone conversations.

The consultative mode of the writing process occurred mainly during the sharing process with the college lecturers. During regular Boards of Studies meetings or special sessions the documents were shared with the relevant college lecturers as works in progress. Lecturers often provided feedback based on the order of the content and the time allocation for the course. They also expressed concerns that they were not a part of the writing process.

There were other dimensions to the consultative process. Curriculum matters with regard to teacher preparation have to receive the endorsement of the Curriculum Committee of the Joint Board of Teacher Education in order to receive approval for implementation. Therefore, the Curriculum Committee received regular updates on the progress of the review. The committee also had the role of referring the curriculum documents to independent reviewers. In addition, the committee also had the responsibility to refer matters of assessment to the Examination Accreditation Committee (another JBTE subcommittee) for reaction to the proposed schemes of assessment.

Another major player in the consultative sphere, the project advisory committee, included members from MOE&C, USAID, JBTE, teachers colleges, the Jamaica Teachers Association, and a primary school in the process of implementing the new curriculum. This committee, charged with monitoring the activities, meets on a quarterly basis to ensure timely delivery of the different components of the project and to ensure also that the different concerns of the Ministry have been addressed. While members are not necessarily subject specialists, they are guided by the reports and feedback from specialists in the field. The impression of one committee member concerning the interaction in the meetings is that “there is an open dialogue ... people have been able to express concerns ...when members have concerns they have been pretty open in expressing them and suggesting ways to go forward in terms of addressing the shortcomings.”

Perhaps the most crucial phase in the consultative process was the referral of the documents to external reviewers. The Joint Board Secretariat carefully selected these reviewers in collaboration with the project coordinator and team leaders, using the following requirements to examine the credentials of potential reviewers:

- Served for more than 20 years in a particular subject area
- National recognition in their area of specialization
- Familiarity with the National Primary Curriculum and alternative assessment strategies
- Openness to innovative ways of instruction

*Perhaps most crucial was the referral of the curriculum documents to external reviewers*

The project coordinator provided the reviewers with basic guidelines for reviewing the curriculum documents. As a result, the feedback from these reviewers was received within this framework.

Generally, the reviewers provided positive comments on the revised documents. Comments that welcomed the revision and the new modes of instruction and assessment were prevalent among the feedback. One example was the reviewer’s comments about the revised Social Studies curriculum:

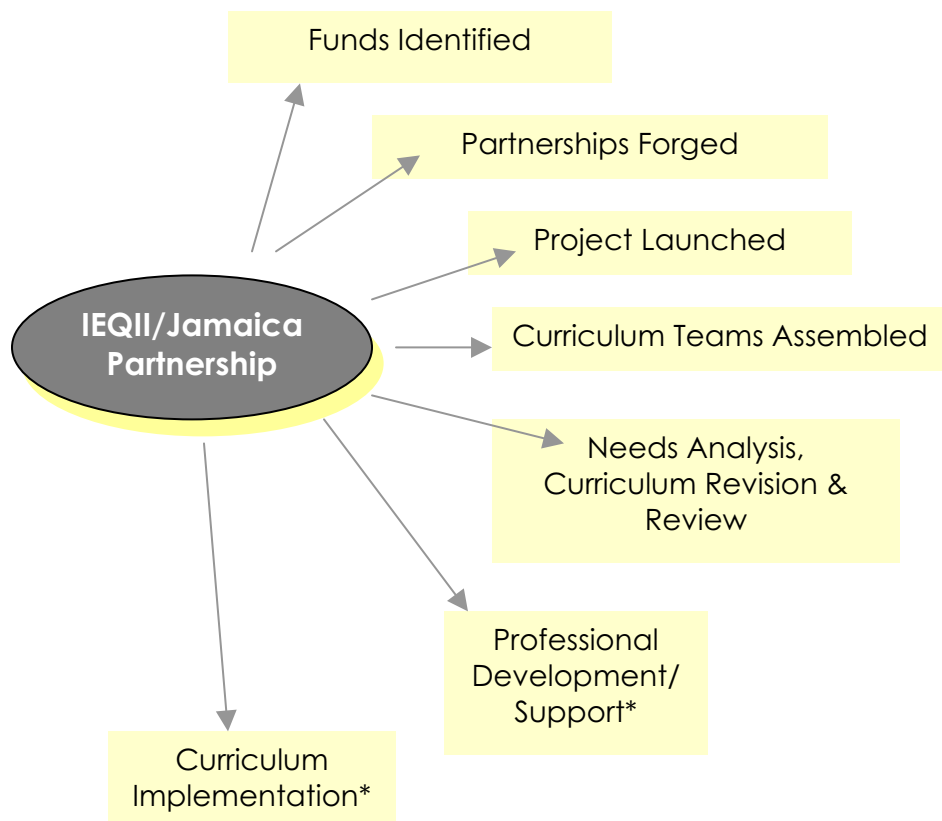
“The syllabus was in need of substantial revision. The existing syllabus is pretty much like it was in the ‘70s ... this revision was long overdue.”

In her comments on the adequacy of the scheme of assessment, the reviewer commented that “the writers of this syllabus appear to be very serious about making Social Studies teaching in the colleges student-centered, with students becoming active learners who are engaged in creating their own knowledge structures.” These comments underscore the shift from adult learners being taught in one mode – yet being expected to teach in pedagogically acceptable modes in the primary school classroom. In other words, college lecturers are guided to ‘practice what they preach’ in the revised curriculum documents.

Figure 1 illustrates the many facets of Jamaica’s transition in teacher preparation.

**Figure 1:** Critical Stages in the IEQ Jamaica Project

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**\* The final two stages are currently in progress.**

## CHALLENGES IN THE TEACHER TRAINING ARENA

As Figure 1 indicates, there was no shortage of challenges during the project implementation – particularly with respect to activities associated with teacher training. These included the creation of viable avenues for lecturer feedback/input concerning the new curriculum, dealing with the issue of integration within the Joint Board program, programmatic interdependence, and partnership.

### *College Lecturer Feedback*

Despite the design of the project, which espouses a collaborative approach, a major concern of college lecturers was that they were not included from the beginning of the curriculum review process. Lecturers also were dissatisfied with the level of input they were allowed to provide in the process. One college lecturer gave his impression of the kind of involvement that he and his colleagues perceived:

“This was something that was discussed over and over at the Boards of Studies: that the curriculum would be revised in some form or shape. We had arguments concerning what should be taught first semester, second semester, etc. These are the kinds of ramblings that came out of our discussions. In relation to this process, we were asked to attend a meeting and we were presented with a syllabus that was done. So in essence we were not involved in the creation of the syllabus. We were asked to look through the syllabus and, in reality, most of the little things, the changes that we made, were probably changes that could have been made by somebody who focuses on another subject area. It was more those changes than anything else. They were not conceptual changes as they relate to my subject area. They were just superficial changes.”

He also offered suggestions for the improvement of the process:

“In my view, the changes in the curriculum should involve the teachers – college lecturers – from the conception. That kind of input ought to be given to us because we are the ones who have to use the curriculum. In my view, the curriculum was comprehensive. We were never needed. The persons who wrote the curriculum did a good job so we were never needed but I have this bone of contention that we ought to be involved!”

*Changes should involve the college lecturers from the conception*

The concern about lecturer involvement is not unique to the college lecturers. Members of the Joint Board Secretariat and project team members also expressed this concern. One project respondent offered the notion that:

“I would have greater involvement of the colleges. I don’t know how we would do this without it becoming unwieldy, but I think we would have to see how we would best get the college lecturers from the start – to feel a sense of ownership. Certainly at the beginning I know there was little – and a sense of ownership began to come in later on but in order not to have that same sort of thing, we have to explore how best we can make that involvement start from an earlier stage.”

While team members and lecturers share the view that this heightened involvement is crucial, no clear solution to this challenge has yet been advanced.

One concern was that student teachers would be asked to teach in a mode contrary to how they were prepared

#### *Integration*

The issue of integration also was a major challenge during the revision process. The new emphasis on integration espoused by the National Primary Curriculum demanded a revisiting of the college program and finding ways of preparing student teachers to teach an integrated curriculum when they themselves are prepared through discrete courses. Participants were concerned that student teachers would be asked to teach in a mode that was contrary to the way in which they were prepared. This challenge required several brainstorming sessions with team members and other stakeholders within the curricular context. Possible solutions included:

1. Teaching an integrated unit around a central theme during a selected period in the college program (e.g., my college community).
2. Developing a course that deals with the principles and processes of integration as they relate to the Jamaican Primary School Curriculum.
3. Encouraging lecturers to model integration through team planning instruction and assessment. This would provide practical experiences of integration for student teachers.

4. Encouraging “micro” teaching activities, where student teachers plan and teach integrated lessons.

Subsequently, a course on integration was developed to complement the revised courses. In addition, the revised courses provided avenues for student teachers to experience the processes of integration.

### *Programmatic Interdependence*

As the IEQ/Jamaica Project focused its attention on revising the curricula for Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, and Mathematics, project participants realized early on that changes in these selected areas would have implications for other aspects of the program. For example, the creation of a course on integration transcended the predetermined boundaries of the venture. The emphasis on current trends in assessment also influenced the JBTE in the effort to reform assessment policies.

A dominant feature of this growing interdependence was the glaring need to revise other courses beyond the boundaries of this venture. This issue received constant attention from stakeholders. The policymakers were concerned with the effect of introducing revised courses in some areas, while others remained unchanged. The curriculum writers also became concerned that courses not being revised nonetheless needed updating to complement the revised courses to adequately reflect current pedagogical concerns.

Thus, the revision process in the form of a partial program revision held several challenges. However, it served as a catalyst for changes in key areas in the teacher education program. The process is now viewed as a flagship for effecting further changes in the JBTE program.

*Policymakers were concerned with the effect of introducing revised courses in some areas but not others*

### *Partnership*

The viability of the IEQ project partnership was crucial in ensuring the success of the process. Initially there existed the need for clarifying the roles of the different partners. This is not surprising, since the partnership style of the IEQ differs substantially from traditional project partnerships. According to a member of the partnership:

“At first I think there was a little problem with communication, largely because we were not talking frequently enough to know what was happening on this side. Since then, we have formalized that: we now try to have weekly conferences between the coordinator and the team members ... I think that has helped to make sure that people are not out of the loop in terms of what is happening.”

The IEQ, while sharing success stories of partnership, also is faced with challenges that relate to the infusion of a different kind of project partnership. Through dialogue and collaborative problem solving, partners become more familiar with the processes of interaction. Despite the principles of the partnership, these tenets were lost on some partners, as they still saw a hierarchical relationship between the key players in the project. Local partners expressed their views about the relationship in different ways, as for example:

*Despite principles of partnership, some still saw a hierarchical relationship between the key players*

“The communication link has improved ... I don’t know whether some partners have been on the ground sufficiently to understand all the local issues. Sometimes I get the notion that the preconceived expectations and ideas in terms of what should be happening on the ground – the knowledge of the local scenario is interpreted too much in terms of what exists in the other projects rather than here, which is a little different.”

Challenges regarding partnerships within the JBTE were also evident. The nature of these challenges was highlighted when the curriculum writing teams recommended a change in assessment practices. The weighting of courses that traditionally had 40 percent weighting for coursework and 60 percent for examinations were recommended to have 50-50 or 60-40 weighting in favor of coursework assessment. Initially, the examination accreditation committee of the JBTE rejected this recommendation, which was made based on consultation with student teachers and teacher educators (Fraser, Thomas & Duplessis, 2000). However, after the writers made a case for the revised weighting, the committee approved a 50-50 weighting on a provisional basis. This scenario denotes the transactional nature of the partnership that exists within the Joint Board where policies and practices are negotiated through the individuals and committees that have been assigned to perform these roles.

The challenges in the IEQ Jamaica Project also entailed issues of collaboration, adapting to new teaching/learning styles and communication. These challenges were not insurmountable and provided crucial learning experiences for improving curricular issues in Jamaican teacher education.



## THE OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the difficult challenges in the process, several of the experiences warrant mention as opportunities for marked positive change. These include professional growth of team members, capacity building of teacher educators, and clarifying the vision for teacher education in Jamaica.

### *Professional Growth*

Through interaction with their colleagues and other project partners team members have expressed the view that they not only contributed to the process, but gained from it. One member from the Ministry of Education said:

“What I liked about it was that I think I had something to offer and I was very glad for the opportunity to be involved – and I think it was appreciated. It was a very fulfilling task for me because I am involved in an M. Ed. Program, at this stage learning all these new things. These avenues in education raise consciousness. It was really a nice opportunity to experience the course in a very structured way.”

Another team member, a college lecturer, also shared the opportunities the experience provided for her:

“For me there was an enlightenment that some of the same problems that I encountered as an individual existed in other places and there were also opportunities for solutions and varied solutions in the process. People were able to make decisions as a body that previously we ignored. It was a grand opportunity for me to be involved in this revision and it helped to heighten the awareness I had of what is happening both in the schools and in other colleges so that you can help the students some more.”

During curriculum writing, the team members saw their opportunity to share thoughts on the various aspects of teaching and learning as a major opportunity for professional development. While they acknowledged their contributions, they also were aware of the professional gains they had accrued during their involvement in the process.

## CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

The training component of the IEQ/Jamaica project provides a unique opportunity to build the professional competencies of teacher educators through

*Team members saw their opportunity to share thoughts as a major growth opportunity*

*Jamaica's  
curriculum  
revision has  
led to  
broader  
curriculum  
reforms at  
the  
teachers  
college  
level*

workshops, college visits, and encouraged field visits to primary schools. College lecturers who have favorably rated the training experiences provided in the projects have welcomed the training workshops. While some participants see the need for sensitivity to their previous knowledge, the responses from workshop reviews indicate the benefits gained by college lecturers.

The workshops are designed in a collaborative, interactive mode and address the issues of integration, assessment and other methodological components required for the effective delivery of the revised curriculum. Presenters normally encourage group interaction and act as facilitators rather than the repositories of knowledge. The positive response to the training workshops has been reflected in the participation of colleges as well as feedback from lecturers. In one college, the principal identified resources to allow additional faculty members (outside of the IEQ quota) to attend the training sessions. In explaining her motivation for doing so, she mentioned that a number of events in her college context would be informed by the workshop activities. Therefore, she wanted her faculty to receive firsthand knowledge of the process.

#### **THE WAY FORWARD**

The IEQ/Jamaica Project is a work in progress. However, lessons learned from the process so far hold great possibilities for further improving the quality of education. The obvious and initially obscure linkages in the process have taught important lessons to the stakeholders. Jamaica's curriculum revision has led to broader curricular reforms at the teachers college level. The activities for the remaining months in the project will focus on professional development of college lecturers and their effectiveness as instructors and models of sound pedagogy for their student teachers. Support will be offered through site-based visits and in-service workshops.

Ultimately the IEQ/Jamaica Project seeks to develop knowledge and attitudinal and methodological competencies in teacher educators. As a result, the partners have developed a profile of the college lecturer that includes the attributes that follow. In terms of knowledge, the teacher educator should be familiar with the Jamaican Primary School context for which he/she is preparing student teachers. The knowledge of specialized content and models for sharing the content are also necessities. By fully engaging in IEQ project activities, the college lecturers should also possess a repertoire of methodologies that will

enhance the sharing of content knowledge with student teachers and provide instructional examples for their student teachers.

The college lecturer also should demonstrate commitment to quality. This entails having a perspective of student teachers as active learners and not passive recipients of knowledge. By encouraging cooperative learning experiences and using a variety of learning strategies, college lecturer will be able to chart the path to quality with their student teachers.

By improving the quality of the offering of teacher educators, the profile of the primary school teacher will become more realistic. This primary school teacher should be every bit as comfortable with innovative, hands-on learning and assessment activities as his or her pupils.

To chart the way forward, the lessons learned so far need to be regarded as points of instruction. These lessons relate to the scope of the initiative, the involvement of the end users, and the communication links in the partnerships.

The IEQ/Jamaica project initially was intended to revise four subject areas. However, partial revision catalyzed widespread attention to the needs of the entire Jamaican teacher education program – and this realization had both positive and negative effects on the process. The revised curriculum was being created within the milieu of a new national primary curriculum with bold and innovative approaches, yet it became clear that other teachers college courses that needed revision could not receive attention immediately. Thus, the project indicated that a revision of the entire teacher education program at the same time would have been more conducive to effective reform. Nonetheless, the plethora of lessons learned from this engagement is a positive outcome, for these lessons undoubtedly will inform future revision of other areas of the program.

The desire to adequately include the end users of the curriculum (college lecturers) was a dominant theme in the conversations with stakeholders. There are no easy solutions to this dilemma. Lecturers expressed a desire to be involved from the beginning of the process. They did not suggest, however, that the *quality* of the curriculum documents would have been enhanced by this involvement. This outcome underscores the tension between affording professional courtesies to the stakeholders and the efficiency of the process. A possible solution entails holding the collaborative sessions earlier in the process than was done in this instance. In Jamaica, it is necessary to include the lecturers

*The desire to include end users (college lecturers) of the curriculum was a dominant theme*

because ownership of the process is key to ensuring effective curriculum delivery. The statement by the chair of the Joint Board of Teacher Education is insightful on this point:

“The greatest curriculum in the world in the hands of a poor teacher will accomplish little. A mere syllabus in the hands of a good lecturer will accomplish much” (Miller, 2001). This quotation may also be extended to mean, “The greatest curriculum void of ownership by its end users will accomplish little. A mere syllabus that is owned by its end users will accomplish much.”

This view is endorsed by the project coordinator, who stated in her initial address to stakeholders, “where there is partnership, there is ownership” (Fraser, 2000).

*The initial  
hiccups  
serve as an  
instructional  
tool for  
improving  
communica-  
tion*

Recognizing that communication is key to ensuring a smooth path to achieving quality in education, the IEQ/Jamaica project sought to engender a shared vision of the process and products among all partners. The initial hiccups in the process serve as an instructional tool for improving communication among partners. Weekly conferences have been identified as one solution to communication problems. Further dialogue between the partners concerning the communication process and the nature of the partnership are envisioned to provide a smoother journey on the path to quality.

The positive experiences on the path to quality included team selection, interaction during the writing process, and the quality of the products. The faculty development venture, though in its early phase, also has been favorably assessed.

Lessons learned as a result of the IEQ/Jamaica project experiences will serve as a guide for further initiatives of this nature. Indeed, much work remains to implement the full range of changes desired for primary school curriculum – and the effective teacher practice that will determine its success. But the first step has been taken: the project already has influenced policy and pedagogy within the Jamaican teacher education milieu.

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# 6

# MALAWI

## *Linking Research to Educational Policy and Practice*

**IEQ/Malawi Team:** Docks R. Jere – Coordinator; Henri Chilora; Yoas T. Kamangira; Elias S. Kaphesi; Joyce C Kasambara; Francis Mabeti; Steve M. Maliakini; Lester Namathaka; Abigail Harris; Amy Jo Dowd

**Institutions:** Malawi Institute of Education, Save the Children/US Malawi Field Office

**Purpose:** To build and strengthen institutional capacity to design, manage, and utilize action research to inform local and national policy and practice leading to quality basic education.

*More than 86 percent of Malawi's 10 million people live in rural areas, where teachers are in great demand and short supply – classes with more than 100 pupils are common.*

**T**he introduction of Free Primary Education in Malawi in 1994 was at once an extension of new opportunities for children and ominous problems for financial and educational planners: the country's increase in pupils came without the resources necessary to serve them.

Expanded access to secondary education and the opening of a new university have made a positive impact on Malawi's education development strategy. Yet the data on young learners have been worrisome. Primary school enrollment is estimated at 3 million pupils in 4,500 schools. The national pupil/teacher ratio in 1997 was 61:1 – but the reality on the ground is that in Standard 1 the pupil/teacher ratio across districts can be as high as 173:1 and as low as 15:1 in Standard 8. Education observers have visited schools with more than 800 children staffed by three teachers. Thus, the provision of education severely strains human and financial resources. Despite a high level of government funding (27% of the recurrent budget is devoted to education) the sector remains seriously under-funded as it faces the in flux of pupils. Added to this is the cost of high inefficiency both internal and external; only 20 percent of the primary cohort completes the primary cycle.

To address this situation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) began the process of policy review and development resulting in the Policy & Investment Framework. This document clearly articulates the government policy, priorities and the budgetary support for those programmes that are consistent with available resources. It is a tool for guiding investment strategies to address critical needs. In other words, the PIF is meant to address the key challenges facing Malawi's education system and to coordinate efforts of development partners including parents, local communities, international donors, Non-Governmental Organizations, religious organizations and private education providers. PIF has identified "Quality" as one of the seven main challenges that face Malawi's education system.

*Observers have visited schools with more than 800 children, staffed by three teachers*

## EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

Malawi's government is striving to enhance the capacity of the education system to provide instruction with acceptable quality – a fundamental issue for the country. The introduction of Free Primary Education has resulted in a dire shortage of physical and human resources – especially trained and capable teachers. In recent years, this shortage has been exacerbated by the tragic spread of the AIDS pandemic. Consequently, a rapid decline in attainment of learning outcomes has occurred, and the quality and efficiency of Malawi's primary education system have deteriorated to a critical low point.

*The donor community has been actively supporting the education sector in Malawi, especially since 1994*

The donor community has been actively supporting the education sector in Malawi, especially since 1994. Some sources of support have come from UNICEF, DANIDA, World Bank, ADB, European Union, JICA, CIDA, GTZ and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID, for instance, supports several programs such as the Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE), which seeks to increase enrollment and persistence of girls in primary school through social mobilization; the aforementioned Policy Investment Framework (PIF), a sector-wide approach to improving access, quality and efficiency in the education system; the Quality Education through Supporting Teaching (QUEST) program, which centers on teacher training and community empowerment; and Improving Educational Quality (IEQ), which aims to improve education quality through action research at the classroom level.

## EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Educational quality in Malawi is a product of the conditions of teaching and learning prevalent in schools: school/classroom environments, instructional strategies, and instructional resources that strive to treat all pupils equally. Pupil achievement in numeracy and literacy is a key indicator of educational quality.

## IEQ/MALAWI ENTRY POINT

As mentioned earlier, the advent of Free Primary Education created a severe strain in the education sector of this country, as the dramatic increase in student enrollment over stretched the capabilities and resources of the system. As a solution to this problem, the Malawi Government in collaboration with other stakeholders and the donor community, decided to embark on the



formidable challenge of improving the quality of education in the country while meeting the tremendous demand.

In September 1998, with funding from USAID, the Quality Education through Supporting Teaching (QUEST) project was launched in Mangochi by Save the Children Federation (USA). One of the objectives of QUEST was to enhance the quality of education in schools. In order to achieve this objective, the project initially planned to conduct targeted research with the purpose of establishing positions in schools and guiding project interventions. However, through collaboration with the Improving Educational Quality Project and USAID, a partnership between the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and Save the Children Federation, Malawi Field Office was formed in January 1999, with the purpose of expanding the research agenda and its potential to inform and guide national educational policy.

*A partnership was formed with the purpose of expanding the research agenda and its potential to inform and guide national educational policy.*

These collaborative efforts brought together resources from the Malawi Institute of Education, Save the Children Federation (US) and government institutions such as community development offices, teacher training colleges, district education offices and classroom teachers from primary schools, to participate in the IEQ activities. The purpose of these efforts is to build and strengthen the research capacity in Malawi in order to further improve quality education for the Malawian child.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

The acquisition of skills is a necessity for project activities to be implemented successfully. It was in this light that the project trained its staff members and those from other educational institutions in research methodologies. In addition, the project provided its staff members with computer skills in word, excel, and SPSS software programs.

The magnitude and complexity of the data in this study called for the use of more technical approach in data collection, management, analysis, and reporting. The success is attributable to hands-on training of data collectors and their dedication to duty. The use of trained data collectors in this longitudinal study has been beneficial and worthwhile to Primary Education Advisors and classroom teachers. For example, Primary Education Advisors are using the knowledge they have gained from the study to design, develop and organize in-service training courses that are aimed at improving teachers' classroom

practices. In addition, teachers are using the knowledge from this study to improve strategies for equipping children with numeracy and literacy skills.

## APPLYING THE CYCLE OF IMPROVEMENT

As a process, the Improving Educational Quality approach seeks to generate knowledge about the reality of teaching and learning by assessing pupil performance and observing instructional practice; facilitate local, national and international mechanisms for disseminating information to users of the findings; and foster collaboration with local institutions so as to strengthen the in-country capacity to implement the host country educational priorities at the local level.

As detailed in the Prologue, IEQ projects are distinguished by a “cycle of improvement,” which features three stages: **Assessing the Situation**; **Analyzing the Results** of the assessment; and **Acting on the Findings** in practical ways that address the issues illuminated by the research. Here is how those stages unfolded in the IEQ/Malawi activity.

### ASSESSING THE SITUATION

The project designed a systematic school and classroom based research to examine the local factors influencing success in teaching and learning. Bearing in mind that most studies about national reform are short-term and do not systematically collect qualitative and quantitative data on teachers and pupils, the IEQ/Malawi research team designed a longitudinal study to be conducted over a three-year period. The study followed the IEQ process of assessing instructional practices, student performance, and the classroom environment in light of national priorities.

*The team designed a study involving 2,000 pupils, 70 headteachers, 188 teachers, and the community*

This study involved 2,000 pupils, 70 headteachers, 188 teachers and the community around each school in Mangochi, Balaka, Blantyre, and Salima districts. The study aimed to investigate factors that affect the quality of learning in primary schools. The research study focused on:

- Pupil performance in Mathematics, English and Chichewa;
- Teacher preparation and delivery of lessons;
- Teacher efficacy;
- Headteachers’ school management style;
- Community participation in the school management and development; and

- Teacher, pupil, and headteacher background.

A complete list and copies of the instruments used in the IEQ/Malawi study can be found on the “Research Tools” page of the IEQ Web site, at <http://www.ieq.org/Tools/index.asp>.

As detailed below, the longitudinal research was designed to be conducted in three consecutive years: baseline – February, 1999; follow-up – October, 1999; and second follow-up – October, 2000.

**The Baseline Survey, February 1999.** The sample for the baseline survey consisted of 65 primary schools drawn from the Mangochi and Balaka districts in the southern region of the country. These schools were selected using a random sampling method after stratifying on school and class size, i.e., urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The sample involved in this study included headteachers, class teachers, pupils, school committees and members of the community. Classes involved in the survey were standards 2, 3 and 4. A total of thirty-two pupils (50% boys and 50% girls) were involved from each of the selected schools. Sixteen pupils were selected from standard 2 and eight each from standards three and four. In addition, one class teacher from each of the three classes was involved in the survey. The team collected data through interviews, observations and administration of tests, which were curriculum based and administered to pupils and class teachers only. Information collected included pupils’, teachers’ and headteachers’ background and general class data (e.g., availability of books and other facilities in the schools).

*The project conducted two follow-up studies, each time adding schools for further comparisons*

The sample size for the Baseline survey comprised 2,000 pupils (49.3% girls), 183 teachers, 65 headteachers, school committee members and parents from each of the participating schools.

**The Follow-up Study, October 1999.** Nine months later, the team conducted a follow-up study. During this follow-up survey, researchers followed the same pupils they assessed at Baseline survey. In addition, 5 schools were added as a comparison.

**The Follow-up Study, October 2000.** Twelve months later, the same pupils were followed, and five more schools from Salima (with similar geographic and economic characteristics) were added as an additional control group.

## ANALYZING THE RESULTS

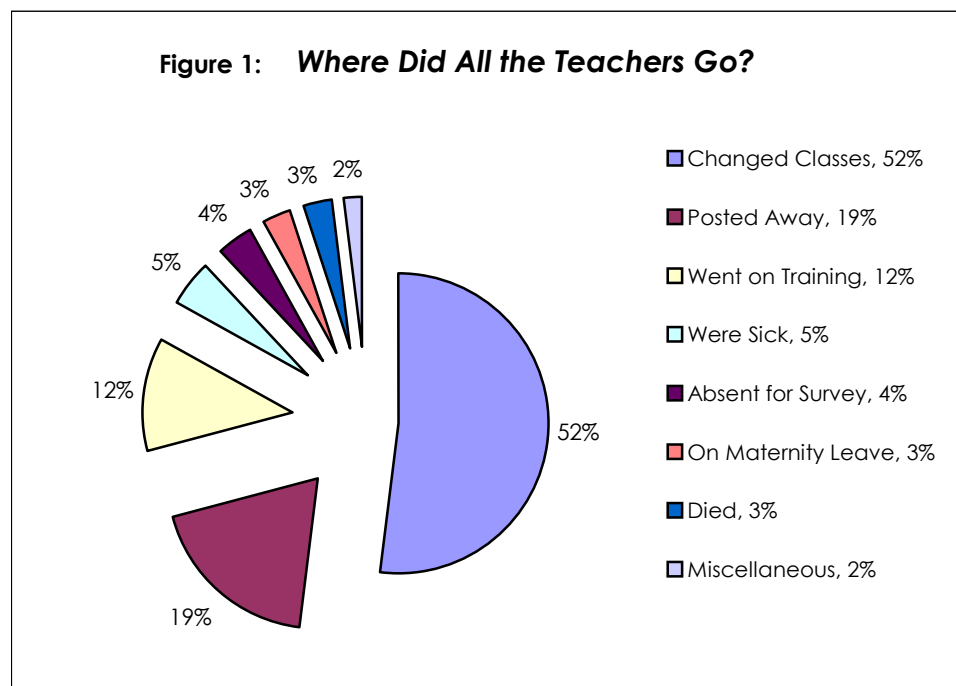
*The team focused on teacher mobility within an academic year*

The learning environment, always a critical factor in assessing academic achievement, can be especially daunting in Malawi. In addition to teacher shortages, it is not uncommon to see pupils sitting on a mud floor in a room with insufficient light and an old chalkboard. As a result of these harsh learning conditions, pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy are minimal.

As the IEQ/Malawi longitudinal research progressed, the project team focused on several critical areas with powerful implications for education quality: teacher mobility within an academic year, and the incidences of pupils dropping out of school, repeating grades, or being accelerated through school.

### *Teacher mobility*

In October 1999, as the school year drew to a close, approximately half of the 183 teachers who participated in the Longitudinal Study in February in Balaka and Mangochi districts were no longer in the classrooms to which they had been assigned in February. IEQ researchers from the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and Save the Children/US Malawi Field Office examined this phenomenon as part of the long-term IEQ study of pupils, teachers, schools, and communities in Malawi. Figure 1 sheds some light on the migration issue:



More than half of the teachers who left their February classes were reassigned to teach a higher-level standard, or to fill vacancies created by other circumstances such as death, long illness and training. In a system where constant movement is the norm, many teachers were “posted away” to other assignments for administrative and personal reasons. In this state of flux, headteachers commonly have no choice but to regularly reassign teachers in order to best use the remaining staff capabilities.

Indeed, IEQ research revealed that the general teacher shortage, which is especially acute in rural areas, leads to a “chain reaction”. For example, if a teacher is posted away, the headteacher of the losing school has to re-assign his/her remaining teachers to different classes.

In addition, chain reactions from sickness were also multifaceted. The IEQ researchers found that, as ill teachers within schools were replaced, others also left because allegedly, there was “too much sickness at the school,” and still others reported leaving to be closer to health care facilities they or family members needed. After the initial survey had revealed that 12% of the pupils had lost either one or both parents, the project team included certain questions in the Survey Instruments that aimed at finding the impact of AIDS. This flexibility in the survey had to be maintained in order to gain more insight into the education problems related to high incidence of AIDS and malaria.<sup>1</sup>

As ill teachers were replaced, others left because, allegedly, there was too much sickness

Training needs, too, have a strong impact on mobility. During the survey, IEQ researchers found out that 12 percent of the teachers missing in Balaka and Mangochi districts had left to pursue a three-month training course at various teacher training colleges. It is therefore not uncommon for teachers to have to take on extra classes at other levels, as Headteachers scramble to find teacher coverage. The demands are huge, as shown by this Headteacher’s comment:

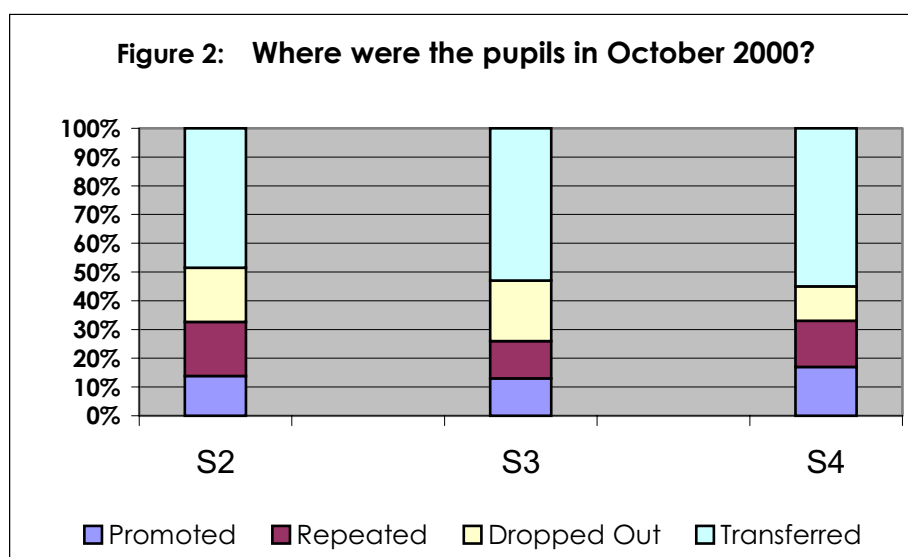
***“Next time you come here you will not find me. I am tired of being a Headteacher. I want to be a common teacher so that I, too, can come and go as I please.”***

<sup>1</sup> Abigail M. Harris & Jane G. Schubert. (2001). *Defining Quality in the Midst of HIV/AIDS: Pupil Effects in the Classroom*. Washington, DC: Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) II Project.

Across all levels, 15 percent of primary school students repeat the grade

### *Pupil dropout*

The introduction of Free Primary Education in 1994 resulted in the chronic shortage of basic, relevant physical and human resources and a very high pupil/teacher ratio. The findings of the longitudinal IEQ/Malawi study confirm the observations made by the Ministry of Education that the deterioration in the quality of education offered by the Malawi School system has contributed to high rates of dropout and repetition at primary school level (17% dropout in all standards and 15% repeaters in all standards, according to the Policy Investment Framework). Figure 2 shows the extent of pupil dropout for the February 1999 cohort; the follow-up research accounted for 93 percent of the 2,000 pupils in Standards 2, 3, and 4:



### *Pupil repetition*

The data show that, on average, more than 17 percent of pupils in grades 2, 3, and 4 repeated their classes, with the highest rates for girls in grade 2 and Boys in grade 3.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that many teachers feel that they must keep students back as part of their responsibility to accurately reward student progress. Notwithstanding its complex causes, this situation falls below the government's expectation of developing and providing quality basic education for every child with the purpose of equipping pupils with basic

<sup>2</sup> At standard 3 most of the boys are at an age where they are involved in small-scale businesses such as fishing or working in tobacco estates. This has an adverse effect on their learning in school.

knowledge and skills to allow them to function as competent and productive citizens in a free society (PIF 2000).

### *Pupil acceleration*

The longitudinal study also reveals that despite all problems resulting from Free Primary Education, there are some gifted pupils who do better than others. During the study it was found that 1.2% of gifted pupils were promoted more than one grade level.

## **ACTING ON THE FINDINGS**

As research findings emerge, it is crucial that this knowledge be translated into information that educators and policy leaders can use. This practical use of knowledge can occur through a process of sharing the information in ways that permit reflection and dialogue or through applying the new knowledge to improve a practice or reevaluate and issue a new policy.

The IEQ/Malawi project generated numerous findings from its longitudinal study in Mangochi, Balaka, Blantyre and Salima districts. These findings have been disseminated at national, district and zonal levels.

The project has been able to convey research findings through seminars and workshops organized at national, district and zonal levels. For instance, in February 2000, the IEQ/Malawi Project organized a national seminar on Quality Education through Research, Information and Action. Participants in this seminar included Ministry of Education officials, Divisional and District Education Officers, University of Malawi lecturers, Malawi National Examinations Board officials, Curriculum Developers from the Malawi Institute of Education, teacher trainers, practicing teachers and school heads, researchers from the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT), and representatives of Malawi religious organizations, non-governmental organizations, and various international institutions.

Dissemination of research findings at district and zonal levels occurred through seminars organized by the Save the Children Federation (US). The participants in the district seminar included all Primary Education Advisors in Mangochi district, 16 selected headteachers, the Assistant District Education

*The project has been able to convey research findings through seminars and workshops at national, district and zonal levels*

Officer, Save the Children/US education trainers, and curriculum developers from the Malawi Institute of Education.

IEQ/Malawi Project team members also participated at dissemination seminars at zonal levels, which attracted all primary school teachers in Mangochi district, all primary school headteachers in the district, and all chairpersons of school and PTA seminars. Besides disseminating the research findings at national, district and zonal seminars, the IEQ/Malawi Project has disseminated the findings through the articles that were published in the IEQ newsletters which were circulated both nationally and internationally.

Lastly, the Malawi/IEQ Project has also held high level consultative policy meetings with policy makers, planners in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other stakeholders in Malawi.

#### OTHER USES OF THE FINDINGS

*Education stakeholders have used the IEQ findings to improve the education system in a variety of ways*

Other education stakeholders have used the findings that IEQ has disseminated to improve the education system in various ways. For example:

- Recommendations from the Teacher Mobility Study are being used in school staffing and communication in the education system.
- QUEST is using some of the findings to design courses for training teachers in how to teach Mathematics, English, and Chichewa. QUEST is also training teachers on appropriate methods of teaching and lesson plan preparation. Other interventions being carried out by QUEST as a result of the IEQ research findings include training of school committees and PTA members.
- IEQ researchers are also supplying information to USAID for determining educational aid to the Malawi Education System.

As the IEQ/Malawi outcomes summarized in Figure 3 indicate, the project has stimulated multi-faceted understanding of Malawi's educational priorities. For example, research has provided insights about many school and classroom realities resulting from recently introduced primary education system reforms such as pupil dropout and repetition, acute shortage of trained teachers, and teacher mobility. A variety of stakeholders in the education system now are using these insights to carry out interventions in order to improve the quality of education in the country. In addition, IEQ participation in improving the quality of education in Malawi has helped equip a cadre of local professionals



with research as well as computer skills. It is now hoped that this group will continue to exercise these skills for improving educational quality in the country.

**Figure 3: The IEQ Malawi Project**

Assessment	Analysis ( <i>Selected Findings</i> )	Action
<b>February '99 Baseline</b>		
Teacher Observations	Teachers talk – pupils listen	Save the Children Federation (SCF)-designed teacher training to support active learning
Teacher Test	Some teachers more knowledgeable than others	Scores guided mentor teacher selection by SCF to ensure they had good content knowledge base
Pupil Achievement Test	Texts too difficult for most	Supplementary reading materials developed by SCF
Pupil Attendance	Absenteeism in October for initiation	Ministry adjusted school calendar; village leaders adjusted initiation rites
<b>October 1999</b>		
Teacher Absenteeism	Attrition from October-February	Follow-up study to determine why teachers were missing
Teachers' Use of Text Materials	Trained/untrained teachers using text materials the same way (primary as source of exercises)	School-based and zonal in-service courses in targeted districts
<b>October 2000</b>		
Pupil Attendance	<b>27%</b> absent to care for sick family member	SCF sensitizing and training school committees
Acquisition of Literacy	<b>54%</b> males/ <b>69%</b> females in Standard 3 unable to read S2 Chichewa text	Teachers oriented to give girls equal attention as boys, through gender sensitization campaigns
<b>October 2001</b>		
National Policy Dialog	High-level dialog between researchers and policymakers	IEQ findings shared and discussed with policymakers to build consensus on needed actions

# 7

# UGANDA

## *Using Research to Define Quality in Learning*

**IEQ/Uganda Team:** Lawrence Kanyike and the late Joseph Carasco, Coordinators; the late Modesta Omona; Vincent Birungi, Denis Nuwagaba; Patience Namanya; Imelda Kimeza; Nancy Clair

**Institution:** Uganda National Examinations Board

**Purpose:** Develop research capacity within the Ugandan educational community to inform efforts for improving education and reporting on the impact of the primary education reform program.

*Participatory Action Research combines investigation with action – and assumes that human behavior is contextual and dynamic; it functions in changing and adaptive ways.*

**A**fter the political turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s, Uganda has been working to restore its economic, political and social strength. By 1992, two influential analyses of the country's educational challenges – a commission report and a follow-up White Paper from the government – had recommended primary education as the target for reform. In response, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) initiated a comprehensive education reform program.

Ugandan policy makers articulated a systematic approach to education reform that included re-establishing and strengthening the teaching profession, enhancing community participation in improving education quality and equity, allocating resources for materials, revamping the examination process, revitalizing education publishing, and rehabilitating schools and teachers colleges. Achieving these objectives would have far-reaching benefits for pupils, teachers, administrators, and community members. Pupils would improve literacy, numeracy and other basic skills, teachers would refine pedagogy, administrators would better their administrative and management skills and community members would play active roles in the education of their children.

Ugandan reform is being implemented within the framework outlined in the White Paper and the realignment of social service resources and decision making through the implementation of the policy of decentralizing power and authority from the national to local governments in accordance with the Local Governments Act of 1997. All Uganda's local governments are now in the process of assuming functions formerly within the purview of the national government.

The government has set up the Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS) to guide primary education reform. TDMS is a comprehensive delivery system whose ultimate goal is increased pupil learning. It is centered on reformed primary training colleges (PTCs) where pre-service teacher training has been revitalized and in-service training has been developed. Outreach activities

*All Uganda's local governments are now in the process of assuming functions formerly within the purview of the national government*

include teacher and headteacher training, refresher courses and community mobilization activities.

With growing political stability and a comprehensive reform plan in place, the central government invited international donors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank to participate in shaping a primary education reform program building on the White Paper.

USAID supports the TDMS through the Uganda Education Reform (SUPER) Programme, which since 1993 has established 18 core primary training colleges to provide self-instruction modules, residential training programs, and on-site technical support. Other accomplishments include the development of education programs; textbook distribution to schools; grants to promote girls' education; up-grading of untrained teachers; and training approximately 10,000 volunteer community mobilizers (Project Implementation Unit, Ministry of Education, 1999). The World Bank has contributed to reforming the examination process, revitalizing education publishing and rehabilitating schools and teachers' colleges.

### **IEQI (1995-97)**

*The purpose was to strengthen the research capacity within the Ugandan community*

Within this context, the Improving Education Quality (IEQ) Project began discussions (1993 & 1994) with USAID/Uganda to formalize a relationship between IEQ and the Ugandan National Examinations Board (UNEB) to sponsor research activities that linked to the education reforms. The purpose was to strengthen the research capacity within the Ugandan community, examine the reality of the educational experiences for local educators and pupils, and routinely inform and discuss the knowledge gained about primary schools with key stakeholders.

In 1995, IEQ/Uganda began with a National Forum to discuss the information needs of the education reform. Researchers, policy-makers and practitioners met to discuss the education reform and the meaning of quality learning. The meeting resulted in a research agenda: Two large-scale baseline studies were commissioned and completed by IEQ research teams between 1995-97. Both employed quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the overall conditions and climate of primary schools. These studies revealed, among other findings, significant shortcomings in all components of school

effectiveness (e.g., infrastructure, local leadership, below-living wages for teachers, inadequate instructional materials, poor use of instructional time). The two studies produced evidence that better performing schools have more of the above components in place (Carasco, et al., 1996; Munene, et al., 1997).

The publication of the first two IEQ studies resulted in a policy dialogue regarding the general education conditions and contributed to policy decisions regarding use of textbooks to be incorporated in teacher training programs, modification of the incentive grant scheme for the promotion of primary school education for the girl child, and the establishment of minimum education standards (Carasco, Kanyike, & Clair, 1998). These baseline studies proved to be invaluable to the information demands of the education reform.

*The publication of the first two IEQ studies resulted in a policy dialogue about the general education conditions*

Meanwhile, primary school enrollment increased through the implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE), which made it essential to sustain and expand community participation in school activities. Building upon the findings from the IEQI (1995-97) research, IEQ/Uganda began a research program that emphasizes qualitative and participatory action research methodologies. With the stress of UPE on local schools, a research methodology was sought that could not only inform policymakers about the complexities and possibilities of community participation, but improve quality learning at the selected schools participating in the research. Participatory action research (PAR) is one methodology in the family of participatory approaches.

## **IEQII (1997-99)**

In January 1998, IEQII was launched in Uganda with a national meeting to discuss findings from IEQI research, revisit the Ugandan education reform, introduce PAR as a possible research methodology, and build the IEQII research agenda. Like IEQI, IEQII functions as a research and development component to support education reform. Its objectives are to: strengthen the methodological capacity of the Ugandan education and research community; disseminate and develop mechanisms on how to use the research findings to strengthen the educational system; create opportunities for partnership and dialogue among Ugandan policy makers and practitioners; and facilitate international linkages between Ugandan and international research communities.

## *Method*

IEQII relates directly to one of Uganda's education reform objectives: enhancing community participation in improving education quality and equity. To understand how outside stakeholders and community members begin participatory action research (PAR) to improve education quality the researchers-cum-facilitators used interpretive theory and data collection techniques (Erickson, 1986; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and participatory learning and action (PLA) tools (Kane, 1995). They took the role of participant observers to explore perspectives of quality learning and community participation in three rural schools.

PAR is an iterative process that combines investigation with action. Community members assess their situation, analyze data they have collected, and act on the findings. It is based on several assumptions. PAR assumes that human behavior is contextual and dynamic; it functions in changing and adaptive ways. Local stakeholder groups have the ability and are in a position to identify problems, gather and analyze data and implement an action plan for change. Collaboration between facilitators and local stakeholder groups will produce rich insight. The facilitators can be from outside or from inside a community. In-depth participatory work in a few communities or schools can provide insights that are relevant for other communities or schools and policy makers.

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PAR differs from traditional research. First PAR results in action at the local level as well as information for policy makers and other stakeholders. With practice, this kind of research can become a normal aspect of continuing staff development or community mobilization. Second, it engages people who have been passive "subjects" as active participants in the research process – problem identification, data collection and analysis (Stringer, 1996). Third, participatory action researchers approach the work as interactive partners with community members. They serve both as researchers and facilitators: encouraging participation, prompting discussion, building relationships, collecting data, etc. Finally, PAR findings are immediately understood at the local level because community members have been actively involved in the research process. In short, PAR is a potentially positive, supportive, proactive resource for change.

The power of PAR comes from activity by local stakeholders and dissemination at the local level, but the power of this approach must be kept in

perspective. PAR represents a radical change from traditional research, cultural norms, and the way that many communities function. Radical change in belief and behavior does not happen overnight, and for some, not at all. The effort is labor intensive and the outcomes may not initially affect pupil learning. PAR takes time: it represents a tremendous amount of learning and reflection for all. Nevertheless, participatory approaches to improving education have resulted in positive change especially among communities where there are disadvantaged groups (poor, rural, girls), and where demand for education exists but the government fails to provide adequate resources (Rugh & Bossert, 1998).

There are two interrelated studies, one embedded in the other. The macro study begins in January 1998 when IEQ researchers began preparing to study participation as a method to improve education quality. It focuses on the complexities and possibilities of initiating a participatory process to improve education quality. The inside study covers the fieldwork period from April 1998 to September 1999. It highlights community, teacher and pupil perspectives of quality learning and actions taken. Together these two studies provide insights into broad issues of planning for participation and the specifics among groups.

This case study focuses on the inside study and reports on IEQ activities from January 1998 through August 1999. Its purpose is twofold. First it highlights community, teacher and pupil perspectives on improving education quality and actions taken, and second it provides recommendations to policy makers on enhancing community participation as a way to improve education quality.

IEQ researchers selected three rural schools in Kazo County, Mbarara District to begin the PAR activities, using school-based selection criteria that included teacher stability; hospitality for participation, functioning school management committee (SMC) and parent-teacher associations (PTA), and accessibility.

#### *Process*

In collaboration with IEQ core research team members, three target groups in each school — community members, teachers and pupils — began PAR. PAR begins with facilitators from within and/or from without a community, in this case the IEQ core research team, gaining entry by initiating PAR processes in collaboration with concerned local stakeholder groups.

*Selection criteria included teacher stability, hospitality for participation ... and accessibility*

Researchers, teachers, community members, and pupils explored how quality learning could be defined in concrete terms

Activities in the gaining entry phase (April –October 1998) centered on IEQ researchers building relationships with and confidence of the stakeholder groups, listening to community members and teachers, modeling inclusiveness and getting the stakeholder groups to set the agenda for work. IEQ researchers spent significant amounts of time in the field visiting homes, participating in meetings, establishing trust and practicing participation. IEQ researchers, teachers, community members and pupils explored how quality learning could be defined in concrete terms. The IEQ researchers guided the stakeholder groups through assessment, analysis and action.

As trust and relationships developed, IEQ researchers began guiding the teachers, community and pupil groups through an iterative process of assessment, analysis, and action – back to assessment – leading to improved education quality. A variety of PLA tools such as community map making, Venn diagrams, problem trees and pair-wise ranking were used to guide the groups in problem identification, data collection and analysis, and action.

### *Principles*

In addition to the PAR process, there are several general principles of participation that guide the IEQ work. They are (1) learn from and with the people; (2) go at the pace of stakeholders; (3) learn progressively; (4) link learning to action; (5) be flexible and use friendly approaches; (6) use triangulation and multiple perspectives; (7) search for reasons why; (8) be inclusive among and within groups; (9) promote voluntary participation. These principles have been elaborated in *Participation as a Method to Improve Education Quality: The Principles* (1999), which the Uganda IEQ Core Research Team developed to encourage and assist facilitators of stakeholder groups through the application of participatory methods.

### *Major Events*

Several major events comprise IEQII research. In addition to fieldwork, a significant number of the events are workshops and training. IEQII work represents a tremendous amount of effort and learning by the core research team, national and district stakeholders, community members, teachers and pupils. During the last two years of the IEQII contract (October 1997-September 1999) the IEQ project has sponsored several workshops in different



locations, with and for different audiences, and facilitated by different groups. The following represent highlights. These include:

- IEQ National Meeting January 1998
- Field-based Participatory Action Research Workshop April 1998
- Stakeholder Groups Speak: Fora for Quality Learning September-October 1998
- An Introduction to Qualitative Research: Data Analysis November 1998
- PAR and Facilitation Skills Refresher Course April 1999
- Stakeholder Groups Speak: Quality Learning Exhibitions September 1999

## **PERSPECTIVES OF QUALITY LEARNING: FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION**

From April 1998 to September 1999, PAR activities took place in three schools in Kazo County, Mbarara District. Mbarara District is in southwest Uganda, approximately 240 kilometers from Kampala, which has two urban centres: Mbarara Municipality and Ibanda Town. The majority of the population resides in rural areas. In Kazo, which has drawn an increasing number of new settlers from other parts of the country, ranching and dairy farming are the main economic activities.

Two of the three schools are located in Kazo trading centre (population 2000). The third school is 20 kilometers from its trading center off a dirt road that connects small trading centres. At the beginning of IEQ fieldwork, the Kazo Model Primary School had 16 teachers and 900 pupils. Kyabahura Primary School had 10 teachers and 600 pupils. The Rwemikoma Primary School had 9 teachers and 500 pupils. Recent staff changes – constant fluctuations in the teacher corps – have made it difficult to carry out the research as originally intended.

*Constant fluctuations in the teacher corps made it difficult to carry out the research as originally intended*

In the beginning nine PAR groups were formed from the three school communities: three teacher groups, three community groups, and three pupil groups. Generally all groups were engaged in several PAR activities aimed at

building relationships and confidence, exploring quality learning, assessing their situation, analyzing data that they collected, and taking action to improve schooling. Recently, the headteachers of the three schools have formed the tenth PAR group. The following section details the groups' perspectives of quality learning and the actions taken.

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS' DISCUSSION

Community members' participation in improving education quality has focused predominantly on infrastructure, although during May to August 1999 period, community PAR activities have moved closer to the classroom and quality learning. Community members have take action like building desks and benches, however, focusing beyond desks in search of quality is still hard to break through. Nevertheless, community members have contributed important insights and energy to improving education quality.

*Quality  
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means that  
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care of  
children*

IEQ researchers began by asking the community groups to reflect on their ideas about quality education. Community discussions from May to August 1998 captured many of the factors related to school effectiveness such as conditions of schools, teacher ability, curriculum, and community support. Community comments on quality education include the following: Quality education requires trained teachers with adequate textbooks; it means building schools; it is about learning English and doing math. It means that parents need to take care of children, provide packed food, and cooperate with teachers. There was some early consensus that quality education is dependent upon high expectations, good teachers, sufficient numbers of textbooks, cooperation between parents and teachers, and parents being examples for their children

However, as discussions deepened, community members' comments regarding education quality illustrated different views regarding the purpose of education. On the one hand some comments suggested that the purpose of education was to learn the traditional subjects such as English, math and science. Other comments represented the notion that quality education should be practical, or vocational. Still other community comments suggested that the purpose of education is for individual fulfillment and teaching morals. For example, there were comments that quality education makes a person self-reliant, should be relevant to the needs of the individual and teaches people what is good from bad. Other comments suggested that education should serve the community, that it helps a person be useful to himself, his village and the whole

country. Finally, community members initiated a provocative discussion about who gets educated, what it means to be educated, and what are the consequences.

In August 1998, community members engaged in several discussions of problems that inhibit quality education, specifically pupil learning. Some of the problems listed were: lack of respect by pupils, pupils missing school, lack of resources, poorly trained teachers, lack of school materials and lack of health centres. Community members at one of the schools worked with Venn diagrams to explore the roles and responsibilities of stakeholder groups. This remedied the tendency to externalize education problems to others. After reviewing the list of factors that inhibit quality learning, the community members prioritized those problems they could impact through their actions. Pupil absenteeism was one issue that the community groups felt they could impact.

Two of the community groups collected data on pupil absenteeism by making community maps and visiting homes. They also studied their children's daily schedule to see how it influences attendance. Explicit cultural issues, such as weddings, market days and hunting, and implicit issues regarding the purposes of school emerged. For example, community members mentioned that children missed school because of hunting, cultivating and looking after cattle. A young male community member stated that children should not be involved in hunting at all; that it is dangerous and children miss school. A female community member supported this notion. An elderly man argued that it was not good to limit children. "Let them learn hunting .... it helps them to be courageous ... it is also exciting" (August 17, 1998). Several community members voiced their opinions. Through much discussion it was agreed that hunting is a cultural practice that must be maintained.

## COMMUNITY ACTION

Much of the initial discussions were related to quality education but were somewhat removed from school life. Community members began getting a bit closer to schools when they decided to visit some classrooms. At one school, community members toured Primary 1, 2 and 3 classes when classes were not in session. They noticed that the classrooms had no desks, benches or lockable doors and window shutters. Community members were concerned about the conditions. One community leader said, "I have 5 children in this

*They noticed that the classrooms had no desks, benches, or lockable doors and window shutters*

school, but I did not know that they study under these conditions.” (September 12, 1998).

Touring the classrooms and seeing the conditions first hand may have been the catalyst for the community to contribute money and labor to upgrade the classroom conditions. During the next few months, community members made desks and benches for the P 1, 2, and 3 classrooms. In December 1998, a few community members returned to visit schools when classes were in session. They noticed that some conditions like the toilets had been cleaned. They observed the compound to be “clean and smart.” However, community members noticed that some of the children were dirty because they were sitting on the ground. Community members acknowledged that there was still a need to build more benches in order to accommodate all pupils on seats.

After a year of engaging in PAR activities community members have taken concrete action to improve education quality. In addition, they have collaborated with the nation’s Teacher Development and Management System to construct classroom blocks and have begun construction of additional teacher housing. Community members at one of the schools have gone beyond school infrastructure and have begun to seek the assistance of various state and voluntary agencies. For example, they are working with local leadership to seek ways of providing a dependable source of sufficient clean water for the schools, and also are seeking medical services for the school from the District Medical Officer.

*Community members also have become more involved in academic activities*

Community members have also become more involved in academic activities. In two schools, community members have started monitoring the time that schools open and the time that classes begin. A few community members have observed classes and are beginning to discuss their findings with teachers. These are promising developments, as one of the goals of the IEQ-initiated PAR is to eventually bring the community, teachers, and pupils together so that they can begin to exchange ideas and take suitable action to improve education quality

#### **TEACHERS’ DISCUSSION**

As expected, PAR activities with teachers stayed closer to the classroom than that of the community members. Through PAR activities, the teachers began reflecting more systematically about their professional growth. During

the first year, teachers had in-depth discussions on conditions for quality learning, lesson plans, peer evaluation, pupil evaluation of teaching, and teacher self-evaluation.

IEQ researchers initiated PAR activities by engaging teachers in discussion about the conditions that assist quality learning. Like the community, teachers' responses covered many of the conditions necessary for effective schools. They commented that materials must be relevant and appropriate to the learner's level, teachers must be trained and motivated by adequate salaries, and the environment needs to be conducive. There were several comments about how pupils learn and the role of the learner. Teachers went further to comment on what they should do as good teachers to facilitate learning. Teachers need to be friendly and lively. Teachers need to have good rapport with pupils, they need to be responsible, and they need to support their peers professionally.

Teachers discussed at length the classroom practices that assist learning. They mentioned that they need to be creative, use easily available materials as teaching aids (e.g., bottle caps), use demonstrations, vary teaching strategies, use group work, use learners' experiences and use feedback. They also spent much time clarifying classroom conditions or teaching practices that they did not understand. For example, some teachers wanted clarification on group work, so they discussed what they meant by group work and how they could group pupils in their classes. They mentioned the kinds of random grouping and discussed the purposes of grouping, such as to encourage maximum participation, to promote the spirit of cooperation, to build confidence to help weak learners acquire knowledge and skills from the more brilliant ones, and to encourage collective problem solving.

*Teachers discussed classroom practices that assist learning*

The result of this conversation was a more refined question: How do we maintain pupils on task during group work? Notably, group work was not the only topic handled in this in-depth manner. Other discussions centered on learning and relevancy, positive feedback, revising with learners, demonstrations, and use of local language.

This group work discussion is typical of several conversations on classroom practice that characterized the PAR activities for the first months. Slowly, IEQ researchers began asking teachers how they know they are applying these practices in their teaching. In one school, teachers felt that examining

lesson plans for conditions of quality learning would be useful. During a teacher meeting, the teacher discussed lesson plans that contained some of the conditions. The first lesson plan was on measurement, specifically sinking and floating. After presenting the lesson, the presenting teacher reported on the conditions that favored quality learning such as the use of available materials, practice, interest, guidance by teacher, pupil participation. The teachers had an animated discussion about this lesson and how it could be improved.

Teachers in the three schools discussed different types of feedback and evaluation that would provide evidence for quality teaching, such as peer evaluation, self-evaluation and pupils' evaluation of teaching. Teachers' discussion of pupil evaluation of teaching illustrated potential conflicts about the teachers' role. Some teachers thought it unprofessional to ask pupils to comment on lessons. Others felt that it was unwise. One teacher pointed outside to children playing and said, "Those pupils will not tell us that they do not enjoy the lesson because they fear us." Another teacher disagreed. After 1½ hours, the teachers agreed that in fact pupils could be useful in providing feedback on effective teaching. In response to an extended conversation, one teacher articulated the connection between teaching and learning: "Teaching and learning go hand in hand because quality teaching leads to quality learning."

### TEACHER ACTION

IEQ  
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designing and  
implementing  
ways to assess  
their teaching

Animated and extended discussions characterized the first six months of the teachers meetings. Initially teachers understood action to be more discussion of what they had already discussed. IEQ researchers gently guided the teachers towards action that manifested in teachers' designing and implementing ways to assess their teaching.

#### *Peer assistance/ supervision.*

The idea for peer supervision emerged in two schools during the fourth month of PAR meetings when teachers were discussing how they could monitor whether they were implementing conditions for quality learning in their classrooms. Discussions included logistics and content of peer supervision and in both schools teachers referred to the conditions for quality learning that they generated for content ideas. In one school there was discussion about how the pupils would react to peer visitation. Would they perceive that the "assisted" teacher was weak? This comment suggests that teachers are viewed as the

authority. To the teachers, the idea of a teacher being assisted implied weakness of the assisted teacher.

In both schools, teachers implemented a peer assistance instrument that they had developed. Subsequently, teachers reported on their peers' performance. Comments included: teachers plan their lessons, manage time, bells are heard, teachers mark the exercise books, local instructional aids are used and pupils participate. However, there were areas that needed improvement. The most significant area in this regard was that teachers realized that they were using only one method of teaching, question and answer, despite the fact that they had learned many teaching methods during their teacher training. This finding resulted in discussion of other teaching methods and the development of additional training needs. Teachers have continued to refine and practice peer assistance.

*In both schools, teachers implemented a peer assistance instrument that they had developed*

### *Self-evaluation*

In addition to peer assistance, two teachers' groups felt that self-evaluation would be an effective way to assess whether they were applying conditions for quality learning in their classrooms. Many of the teachers had never heard of self-evaluation and felt that they needed guidance. Discussions focused on the purposes and logistics of self-evaluation. There was much discussion on when and how one should carry out self-evaluation. Finally, a questionnaire was developed.

### *Pupil evaluation of teaching*

In one school, teachers asked pupils to evaluate their teaching. They asked pupils' two questions: what three things did you like about this lesson? What three things didn't you like about this lesson? Findings from the pupil questionnaire taught the teachers things that they did not know about their classrooms. For example, one teacher learned that many of his pupils could not see the blackboard. Teachers realized that they could learn much about their teaching through consulting pupils.

The progress of teachers' PAR activities was slowed down in its second year by a number of factors. Heavy turnover of staff in two of the schools has meant that the process has had to be restarted with new teachers. At the same time, there has been a persistent shortfall of staffing in one of the schools,



*There was a positive outlook, provided staff stability and wages are improved*

making it difficult for peer supervision to take place. Teachers at another school are generally dispirited by lack of payment of wages; the teachers' inclusion on the government payroll has been pending for more than a year in some cases. These factors may contribute to a lack of enthusiasm among some of the teachers for PAR activities.

The above notwithstanding, there was a positive outlook for the teachers in two of the three schools, provided staff stability improves and the payment of wages is rectified. Teachers are working to refine and gain confidence with the peer assistance, self-evaluation and pupil evaluation instruments for the purpose of applying the conditions for quality learning in their teaching.

## **PUPILS' DISCUSSION**

There are two challenges inherent in using PAR with pupils. First, within the Ugandan context, it is rare that pupils are asked to participate in discussions of improving education quality. More often than not pupils are mere receivers of information and subjects of adults' actions. Second, a primary outcome PAR is action. Discussion may be an important first step in mobilizing communities but action geared towards improvement is the ultimate goal. The pupils participating in the IEQ work have met both challenges. They have said much about improving education quality and have taken some actions towards achieving this goal.

### *Perceptions of Their Schools*

IEQ researchers initiated the pupil meetings during the second school term of 1998. They met with pupils from P6, P4 and P2 in the three schools during extra-curricular periods. During the first meetings, the pupils drew maps of the school compound in grade-level and same-gender groups. The mapmaking exercise assumes that there is a lot to be learned from what is or is not reflected in the pupil maps of their school compound. All of the pupil groups in the three schools included the fences enclosing the school compounds, the national flag masts, the latrines, the playgrounds, the school offices, and the school bells. During mapmaking, researchers and pupils engaged in discussion about what is important to improving education quality. All of the pupil groups talked enthusiastically about the playgrounds --- their locations, sizes and positions of goal posts. In one of the schools, pupils



described the school office as a clean/good house because it was one of the few spaces that had a cement floor; none of the classrooms had one at that time. The pupils drew and discussed the importance of the school bell; it tells them when it is time to go home, when they can take breaks and when they should go to assembly. The P4 and P6 girls were the only pupils to initially include classrooms on their maps. The P2 girls initially forgot about the classrooms and drew them at the last minute. The boys drew the classrooms after they had drawn trees, playing fields, fences and other buildings. None of the groups mentioned the classrooms when asked what they liked most about their maps.

### *Views about Good Teachers and Good Pupils*

During the next series of meetings, IEQ researchers facilitated discussions with pupils on their conceptions of good teachers and pupils. Pupils discussions took place in groups composed of members belonging to a single class (e.g., P2 alone) and in groups composed of members belonging to different classes (i.e., groups composed of P2, P4, and P6 pupils). Pupil comments regarding good teachers fell into broad themes such as instruction, discipline, and relationships. In one of the schools, P2 pupils comments about instruction were that a good teacher corrects pupils when they fail; explains work on the chalkboard; teaches pupils English, mathematics and science. P4 pupils added that a good teacher knows what to teach; knows what s/he is doing; and knows English. Finally, P6 pupils added, a good teacher takes part in class; must be trained to teach; teaches well in order to improve the standard of the school; and does not get angry when pupils ask questions.

Pupil comments regarding teacher discipline included the following: a good teacher comes to school early; is well behaved; does not sit in the office but goes to class to teach; does not smoke or drink alcohol. Illustrative comments about relationships suggest abuse of pupils by teachers, and pupils by fellow pupils. For example, pupils said a good teacher is one who stops the monitor from beating pupils; does not beat pupils when they come late; is the one whom pupils tell their secrets, like when the boys disturb girls; does not behave badly by mistreating children.

*Pupils said a good teacher is one who stops the monitor from beating pupils*

Like conceptions of good teachers, pupils' conceptions of a good pupil fell into broad themes of instruction, discipline and relationships. Comments regarding instruction included: good pupils should have knowledge and look smart, write well, read well, should have exercise books, should be healthy, be

happy in class, should read their books. Comments regarding behavior include: good pupils go to school every day, must be hardworking, should not smoke, should not steal and should not drink alcohol. A good pupil should play good games, and should keep good hygiene. A good pupil should plant trees for shade, be attentive in class, and must have discipline. Comments regarding relationships include: a good pupil does not abuse people on the way home from school, does not have bad habits like playing sex, and should not abuse teachers.

### **PUPIL ACTION**

*In one school, pupils decided to post their list of good teacher characteristics as a reminder*

As stated previously, one of the challenges of PAR is action. IEQ researchers posed this challenge to the pupils and asked them what they wanted to do with their characteristics of good pupils and teachers. In one school, the pupils decided to post their list of characteristics of good teachers in the staff room in order to remind teachers. In another school, pupils have been reading during school assembly; the characteristics of good pupils and the honor rolls of pupils excelling in certain fields include sports, punctuality, and cleanliness.

In the second year, pupils chose tardiness and discipline as areas for specific action. For example, in one school pupils decided to trace the homes of pupils who often arrived late at school. This led to drawing a map indicating the homes of all pupils in the research group. For each pupil, they indicated the distance between home and school and in the process they identified the homes of pupils who often arrived late at school and their immediate neighbours who used to arrive early. They suggested signals for hailing each other to team up and hurry to school together to arrive in time.

At two schools, while monitoring punctuality, pupils linked the research to classroom situations. In one school pupils drew bar charts reflecting tardiness. At the other school, pupils drew linear graphs. One pupil commented, "I used to see such graphs in textbooks. I did not know we could make one for ourselves." The discussions accompanying the drawing of the charts assisted the pupils to see how they could improve their situation.

Pupils dealt with discipline in different ways. In one of the schools, pupils decided to record pupils who misbehaved in class. There has been some discussion among the pupils about what to do with the names, and the IEQ researcher worked with pupils to encourage them to come up with ways other than humiliation to deal with disruptive pupils. To combat poor discipline in

class, pupils suggested strategies such as reading books and revising their work when there was no teacher in their classroom. They listed books they had read and made a list of books they wished to read. Pupils having expressed desire to borrow books from the library, the IEQ researcher discussed the issue with the teacher in charge of the school library and pupils began to borrow books from the library. They next wished to monitor how they could improve on reading books.

The data suggest that pupils appreciate that they too have responsibility for their education, as is demonstrated by the pupils' emphasis on tardiness and discipline. The findings presented certainly do not exhaust the possible range of the pupils' ideas and potential for action. IEQ researchers have hopes that the pupils will continue contributing to the education quality conversations in Kazo. They plan to guide the pupils in thinking more deeply about good teaching and learning and how pupils may play more constructive roles in the promotion of education quality.

## IMPACT OF IEQ PAR ACTIVITIES

The findings in *Initiating a Participatory Process to Improve Education Quality in Uganda* (Carasco, Clair & Kanyike, 1999) illuminate the complexities of initiating a participatory process. The findings suggest three interrelated themes: power, dependence and expectations as obstacles to more participatory ways of improving quality learning within Ugandan society. However, the findings also reflect participants' ability and desire to define education issues, collect and analyze data they have gathered, and act independently with regard to improving education quality in their community. In light of the findings mentioned above, there is evidence of IEQ impact at the research site, at the district and national level, and on the core research team on the target reform objective: increasing community participation in education quality and equity.

The findings suggested obstacles to more participatory ways of improving quality learning

## SITE SPECIFIC IMPACT

IEQ activities at the research site had impact on all those who participated and can be characterized by capacity building, school/quality learning improvements and promoting positive relationships.

### *Capacity Building*

PAR activities provided a framework for teachers, community members and pupils to systematically assess their situation, analyze data that they had collected, and act on the findings to improve aspects of education quality. Despite the fact that groups' ability and results were variable, all groups showed improvement in their ability to do the above. In addition, there is evidence of increased capacity to convene meetings, set the agenda and ensure that there is greater participation.

Some of those that participated consistently in PAR activities had the opportunity to join the site-based, district and national conversation about improving education. This is significant: these conferences represented first-time opportunities for many teachers, community members and pupils to voice their perspectives on education in an organized way. The confidence within which community members reported their findings demonstrated the community was significantly empowered. During the school, district and national fora, education stakeholders learned that pupils can be eager and helpful partners in improving education quality.

### *Quality Learning Improvements*

*Community members have begun to get involved in the academic life of the school*

Each stakeholder group made specific contributions to improving quality learning. Initially for community members, concrete action came in the form of school infrastructure improvements. Community members contributed labor and money towards desks, benches and other school furniture. At the end of the first year, they began working on new classroom blocks and teacher housing. Near the end of the project, community members have begun to get involved in the academic life of the school. Some parents have begun to approach teachers to talk about their children's education. This is significant as one of the goals of IEQ is to bring teachers, community members and pupils together to harness their collective energies towards improving education quality.

Teachers' contributions towards quality learning came in the form of self and group reflection about teaching. Teachers realized that they could identify both their strengths and weaknesses in their classroom practice and that they had responsibility for improving their practice. They developed peer, self-evaluation instruments and instruments to enable pupils to evaluate teaching, so

that they can obtain data on their practice. By the end of the first year they began to define concrete training needs that TDMS could fulfill.

Pupils were extremely enthused to be part of the PAR activities. Pupil involvement represented a change in the way that pupils are viewed. Previous to IEQ, pupils were rarely asked in a systematic way about their perspectives and contributions to quality learning. The impact here is twofold: pupils gained confidence to speak out and get involved in improving their schools and adults began to view pupils as valuable contributors to the conversation.

*Pupils were rarely asked about their perspectives and contributions to quality learning*

### *Relationships*

A positive impact of the research activity is the change in relationships among community members, with the core research team, and with district and national education authorities. This is not to say that all relationships changed but there is evidence that as groups began to listen to one another they realized the value in doing that. There are examples of individuals and groups talking with each other in different ways: teachers listening to pupils as they critique classroom practice, national authorities listening to community members as they talk about education quality, and the CCT and the CIS participating on the core research team. Moreover, there is change in the way that community members related to IEQ researchers who they call “those more learned than we” as one community member put it. As community members practiced building knowledge some of them realized that their knowledge was valuable and that outsiders did not hold the all the knowledge.

### *District and National Level Impact*

The target of PAR activities of IEQII has been the three Kazo schools. However there also is evidence of district and national impact through capacity building, partnerships and PAR in education.

Makerere University, Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo, Bushenyi Primary Teachers’ College, Mbarara District Education Office, TDMS and ACFODE are the institutions to which members of the IEQ core research team belong. This means that there has been some transfer of knowledge and skills to these institutions. Also, as mentioned previously, IEQ activities have included meetings, forums for quality learning, and training workshops that have education stakeholders ranging from pupils and parents to education officials at

*IEQ  
deliberately  
constructed  
the core  
research team  
with  
stakeholders  
from different  
Ugandan  
institutions*

district and national levels to university researchers. Many who participated have become more aware of PAR and qualitative research methodologies, and some learned specific skills related to PAR. Partnerships are closely related to capacity building. One of the goals of IEQ was to illuminate the impact of stakeholders partnering to solve education problems. IEQ deliberately constructed the core research team with stakeholders from different Ugandan institutions. Specifically, the team consisted of supportive officials from Mbarara District education office and TDMS personnel.

The partnership between IEQ and TDMS has been strengthened. Community mobilization has always been a part of TDMS and now IEQ has been asked to write and has already written some materials about participatory methods. These materials will be useful to community mobilizers, community members, teachers and headteachers. There have also been initial conversations between TDMS and IEQ on training in participatory methods. The impact of IEQ on TDMS has been added value.

There is a tradition of participatory development activity in Uganda but it is primarily related to the fields of health and community development. IEQ is one of the first projects to bring participatory work specifically to education issues. In June 1999, the IEQ core research team presented, at a workshop organized by the Ugandan Participatory Development Network (UPDNet), a paper at entitled, Can IEQ influence Decentralization through Participatory Methods in School? This paper was the only one on the role of participatory methods to improve education quality. IEQ has impacted participatory work in Uganda through looking at education issues.

### **PROJECT IMPACT ON THE CORE RESEARCH TEAM**

There has been a tremendous amount of learning and growth within the IEQ core research team. Representing institutions throughout the Ugandan system, the core research team has build capacity and increased their sense of efficacy in facilitating PAR. The core research team has developed skills in qualitative research methods, PAR and community facilitation skills. Through training and practice the core research team has demonstrated the ability to conduct PAR activities, keep ethnographic field notes, analyze data and report on the findings. In a sense, they have learned on the job, as this is the first experience with qualitative methods and PAR for almost all of the team.

In addition to increased capacity in designing, implementing and analyzing participatory methods, the core research team has shown an increased ability to report on the process. As early as the first year of IEQII research, IEQ core research team members were doing presentations about PAR for graduate students in education at Makerere University and for teacher trainees at Core PTCs. The IEQ core research team has discussed findings at IEQ exchanges in Boston, MA., and Washington, D.C. and has presented papers in Cape Town, South Africa and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The sophistication within which the core research team discusses the complexities and possibilities of PAR to improve education quality has increased along with the teams' sense of efficacy to conduct this work. Finally, core research team presentations within and outside of Uganda have contributed to the visibility of education issues in Uganda. This can result in more attention and possible resources to improving education quality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From this two-year project, the IEQ core research team recommends that policymakers and other education stakeholders interested in using participatory action research to improve education quality take a number of steps. These include working with the Teacher Development and Management System to provide experiential training to implement PAR; incorporating the PAR principles and process in pre-service teacher education; providing sufficient time and space for all research activities; providing specially focused training for headteachers; using participatory principles to monitor and disseminate results; and providing stable conditions for teachers.

*The research team called for the use of participatory principles to monitor and disseminate results*

## FINAL THOUGHTS

IEQII represents an effort directly related to one of the objectives of the Ugandan education reform: enhancing community participation in the achievement of education quality and equity. This case study reports IEQ activities from January 1998 to August 1999, when, in a sense, the work of Participatory Action Research, or PAR, had just begun. Core research team and Kazo community members were beginning to see positive change in improving education quality. Interested parents, teachers and pupils were defining problems, collecting and analyzing data, and taking action. The next step, for individual PAR groups in Kazo to start to working collectively, was occurring



with community members in one school beginning to talk with teachers about their children's learning.

There is more work to be done with PAR outside of Kazo as well. The principles and process of PAR can add value to existing structures in the education system. Collaboration with the Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS) is under way. The IEQII Uganda Project is providing materials on the PAR principles to TDMS staff. The core research team and TDMS are planning training for various staff and the research team also is planning dissemination activities at teacher training institutions, in collaboration with district education offices, and at workshops for district education personnel, including teachers, headteachers, education officers and inspectors of schools.

*PAR represents a democratization process with the potential to transform communities*

PAR is more than an approach to improving education quality. It also represents a democratization process with the potential to transform communities. While the focus of IEQII has been on improving education quality, community members, teachers, pupils and core research team members have practiced inclusion, participation and democracy – processes all fundamental to individual and community well being. It is possible that the practical experiences of the community with IEQII will encourage them to continue to examine their roles in improving other aspects of their lives (Carasco, Clair & Kanyike, 1999).

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# 8

## EUROPE & EURASIA

### *The IEQ Cycle as an Evaluation Tool*

**IEQ/E&E Team:** James Williams; Joanne Brady;  
Jody Spiro

**Purpose:** Use IEQ principles as a tool for  
examining two models for democratizing  
school-based projects in five countries.

*This case study concerns not the development of a new project, but the evaluation of two existing projects that encompass five countries – an application of the IEQ approach in a new context.*

Throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet, the early 1990s were years of profound transition in economic and political structures – and in many other aspects of everyday life. Like other social institutions, education was greatly affected. At the same time, education’s central and institutional role in the transmission of knowledge, skills, and, especially, attitudes and values has made it a unique tool for those seeking to foster and sustain democratic societies. The various countries undergoing transition have developed a number of innovations intended, in different ways, to create both democratic institutions and individuals with a taste and a predilection for democratic practice. In schools, this has sometimes meant working from the children — and teachers — “up.”

In the cases examined here, two models of democratizing school-based projects drew the attention of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) — the Step by Step Program implemented in (among other countries) Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, and the Ukraine, and the Orava Project in the Slovak Republic. IEQ was asked to conduct evaluations of both efforts.

Unlike other IEQ activities, which typically involve development of a new project in the host country, the Step by Step and Orava evaluations reviewed existing projects. Although programmatically and contextually different, both projects explore ways to democratize schools and the education system – as well as the potential for education to be a democratizing force in the larger society. The two evaluations share IEQ’s key assumptions and approach to collaboration, assessment, analysis, and action. Conducting the evaluations permitted IEQ to further elaborate its quality improvement strategies in very different contexts and to somewhat different ends. That the core principles and strategies remained valuable guidelines under very different conditions speaks to

*The Step by Step countries are Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, and the Ukraine; the Orava Project is centered on the Slovak Republic*

the wider utility of these approaches in the external facilitation of systemic improvements of educational quality.

## EDUCATION IN TRANSITION

*The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the shift to market economies in Eastern Europe ... left schools adrift*

The Step by Step and Orava Projects arose in a context of rapidly changing political, economic, and social conditions. Education had long enjoyed strong state support in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. As a result, a vast majority of the population had access to free education from pre-primary through secondary school and, for the qualified, opportunities in higher education. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the shift to market economies in Eastern Europe, however, left schools, especially the pre-primary schools in the focus of the Step by Step Program, adrift with uncertain funding and less certain missions. Attendance at preschools in Bulgaria, for example, dropped dramatically from 93 percent in 1989 to 62 percent in 1996 (Brady et al, 1999b, citing UNICEF's *State of the World's Children*). Still, the systems continued to function, and with a high degree of commitment and professionalism.

Financial uncertainties were paralleled by shifts in the instructional mission of schools.

Until 1989, schools in the socialist countries of the Soviet sphere were expected primarily to transmit knowledge, attitudes, and skills in service of the state and the state ideology. Schools were expected to produce good socialist citizens. Implementing these goals in a command-and-control economic and political system led, in practical terms, to a rather inflexible, hierarchical and undemocratic school system in which:

- Teachers and students' roles were rigidly defined;
- Students expected teachers to "know everything," and to tell them what was "right" rather than what they knew;
- Teachers believed the responsibility for teaching and learning lay outside themselves, often with the authors of textbooks or the Ministry of Education;
- Teachers viewed their work as disseminating information in standard textbooks;

- Student assessment was based largely on the extent to which students could restate information in the textbooks;
- Teachers relied on rote memorization, drill, and practice to transmit knowledge;
- Independent thinking was discouraged, even punished (Brady et al, 1999b).

Certainly, these characteristics are not unknown in other educational contexts. However, the tight control maintained by government over schooling made the rigidities especially resistant to challenge.

The system was quite effective in providing basic skills and conveying information. Literacy was close to universal, even in extremely poor communities. Scientific and technical training was world class. Yet the system permitted little of what Dewey, for example, might consider essential to democracy in education – participation in schools by parents and community members; development of critical thinking on the part of students; responsibility and freedom in learning; and partnerships between teachers and students in learning communities. Thus, for example, while teaching was highly professionalized, this professionalization served to discourage parents and community members from actively involving themselves in schools.

Not surprisingly in such a hierarchical system, evaluation was understood as a threatening activity, designed to ensure compliance with centrally-mandated policy and to catch offenders, rather than to provide information that would inform program development. As political systems opened up, a variety of internal and external actors called for educational reform — to reflect changes taking place in the larger society and to help bring about and sustain democratic practices. The Orava project, for example, drew USAID support for its efforts:

*In such a hierarchical system, evaluation was understood as a threatening activity*

“to institutionalize its democratic pedagogical practices to educate future generations of Slovaks to the types of behaviors and attitudes they will need to be responsible members of a democratic society (FY2001 Results Review, USAID Slovakia, March 1999: 13, cited in Brady et al, 1999b: 1)” [emphasis added].

Thus, both Step by Step and Orava projects decided to target their democratizing interventions to children and to the practice of schools. Children, the two projects argued, are the key to permanent social change.

## THE PROJECTS

*... child development centers that promote learning and encourage democratic behavior*

The Step by Step program was developed in 1994 by Children's Resources International (CRI), working with the Open Society Institute (OSI), which provides funding. The program's main purpose is to transform former state-supported day care facilities into child development centers that promote learning and encourage democratic behavior among children and their families. Democratic behavior is fostered by family participation in schools; individualized child-centered teaching; and development of children's abilities to make choices. The Step by Step program is characterized by four essential components:

- 1) child-centered curriculum, in which the needs, interests and active participation of children are used (along with curricular objectives) as primary organizing principles for instruction;
- 2) transformation of the teacher role, from transmitter of information to facilitator of instructional resources and learning activities;
- 3) parental involvement, in which parents and community members take an active part in classrooms and instruction;
- 4) collaborative relations with larger educational systems and structures, with teacher training institutions, ministries of education, parents, teachers, and administrators — all necessary for program effectiveness and integration into the national education system.

Program designers reasoned that young children represent a significant entry point for IEQ research activities, both for the long-term impact that children represent and because of widespread support for the education of young children. The program aimed to make democratic practices and principles an integral part of classroom instruction and everyday school life. Doing this would create a model of democratic schools for students, teachers, parents, collaborating partners, teacher training institutions, ministries of education — and others across the system.

To launch a country program, a foundation typically selects a country team consisting of a country director and several master teacher trainers. Country teams are encouraged to adapt the program to local needs and customs, maintaining the core principles of the program. Step by Step has grown rapidly, from 250 classrooms in 15 countries in 1994 to 5,636 classrooms in 26 countries by late 1999. It has expanded to some primary schools as well as to infant and toddler care and developed ties with teacher training institutions and with educational organizations in different countries. For purposes of sustainability, both OSI and CRI have encouraged country programs to establish themselves independently as non-governmental organizations with separate budgets and administrative structures (Brady et al, 1999b).

Despite this organizational success and the (intuitively obvious) benefits of parental involvement and child-centered instruction, the effects of Step by Step on achievement and democratic attitudes and behavior in the classroom had not been previously evaluated.

Formally known as Orava — A Slovak Republic/University of Northern Iowa Collaborative Educational Restructuring Program, the Orava Project was initiated in 1992 by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Comenius University, and the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). The seven-year project, due to conclude in 2002, was funded by USAID and evaluated in early 1998. The overall goal of the project is: “to infuse democratic concepts and procedures into the Slovak educational system” by helping schools utilize “democratically-based instructional practices,” that lead to and are manifest in:

- critical and independent thinking;
- collaboration and cooperative work;
- partnerships between teachers and students;
- student choice, intellectual and personal responsibility;
- flexibility of role and facilitation of learning on part of teachers;
- creative problem solving, inquiry and discovery (with decreasing emphasis on rote memorization, traditional drill and practice);

*The current seven-year project is ... helping schools utilize democratically-based instructional practices*

- tolerance and respect for difference; and
- “authentic” approaches to evaluation of student learning (measuring more complex learning, e.g., conceptual understanding, and writing for different purposes) (Brady & Spiro, 2000; Brady & Spiro, 1999a; Orava Project Summary 1999).

*Model programs and support mechanisms were established at three levels of the system ...*

A set of 10 program activities is designed to achieve these objectives through in-service teacher training, pre-service teacher training, school/university partnerships, educational leadership, library and resource management, conflict resolution, civic education, special education, early childhood education, and parent/school relations. To institutionalize these practices, model programs and support mechanisms were established at three levels of the system, described by three project sub-goals:

- 1) “To establish within the Ministry of Education a support structure for educational reform to be initiated throughout Slovakia.
- 2) “To establish a model program for the preparation of teachers and school leaders at Comenius University and to disseminate this model to other teacher preparation programs throughout Slovakia.
- 3) “To establish a model school program at the basic level in the Orava region of Slovakia and to disseminate this model to schools throughout Slovakia (University of Northern Iowa, 1993: 11, cited in Brady & Spiro, 1999a: 4).”

Essentially, the project adopted a cascade model in which a committed group of educators would be trained in such democratic approaches. They, in turn, would train others, and so forth. Unfortunately, a change in national political leadership proved hostile to the project, and coordinators were forced to abandon the strategy of working with government, specifically the Ministry of Education. Instead, efforts had to be refocused entirely at the grassroots level and at the University of Comenius. Despite the difficult political context, however, the University engaged fully one-quarter of its staff in the project.

Although the Orava Project had been evaluated three times since 1995, this evaluation was the first to center on educational practices and the institutionalization of innovative practice and supportive structures.



## THE EVALUATIONS

### *Evaluation of the Step by Step Program: Goals*

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which child-centered learning strategies were successful in “creating democratic, collaborative behaviors at the local level for newly independent states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Brady et al, 1999c: 1).” More specifically, the study sought to:

- 1) Compare the educational performance and developmental progress of preschool children in the Step by Step program with that of children enrolled in traditional programs;
- 2) Examine the program’s effects on teachers, families, administrators;
- 3) Study the programs’ institutional capacity and “uptake” in key educational systems (in an effort to assess sustainability); and
- 4) Build host country capacity to carry out evaluation and assessment of these issues.

These objectives were addressed through seven research questions, noted in Table 1.

### *Evaluation Process*

To achieve these objectives, the IEQ research teams worked closely with staff from CRI and Step by Step as well as each country’s (Step by Step) research coordinator to develop, pilot, and refine data collection instruments and collect and analyze data. Quasi-experimental methods were used to compare the performance and development of children in Step by Step programs with children in traditional programs. Qualitative approaches were used to collect a variety of other data especially as related to program sustainability.

*The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the success of child-centered learning strategies in creating democratic, collaborative behaviors*

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**Table 1: Research Questions + Measurement Techniques**

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**1. Is the educational performance of Step by Step children comparable to children in traditional programs?**

+ *Individual child assessments (initial, traditional)*

**2. What democratic concepts are children learning (making choices, taking initiatives, valuing individual expression, contributing as a member of a learning community)?**

+ *Classroom observation (initial, expansion, traditional) Survey teachers (initial, expansion, traditional)*

**3. How do Step by Step and traditional teachers differ in their teaching approaches?**

+ *Classroom observation (initial, expansion, traditional) Surveys: teachers (initial, expansion, traditional), kindergarten directors (initial) Interviews: ministries of education, local authorities*

**4. How do families and communities engage in the implementation of Step by Step?**

+ *Classroom observation (initial, expansion, traditional) Surveys: teachers (initial, expansion, traditional), kindergarten directors (initial), country teams; Self-assessment: country teams Interviews: ministries of education, local authorities*

**5. What is the potential for Step by Step programs to become centers of broader community-based activities?**

+ *Surveys: kindergarten directors (initial), country teams; Interviews: ministries of education, local authorities*

**6. Are the energies of parents directed toward other community development initiatives?**

+ *Surveys: kindergarten directors (initial), country teams; Interviews: ministries of education, local authorities*

**7. Can the Step by Step program become sustainable?**

+ *Individual child assessments (initial, traditional) Surveys: kindergarten directors (initial), country teams. Self-assessment: country teams; Interviews: ministries of education, local authorities*

IEQ initially identified a series of existing research instruments used in other settings for the evaluation. Then, a cross-country research meeting was held in Bucharest in April 1998 to examine and adapt these instruments. Country research coordinators piloted each instrument (and each adaptation) in both Step by Step and traditional programs. Results were evaluated in consultation with the U.S. research team. Research coordinators and master teachers conducted joint classroom observations using the proposed instruments, after which adaptations were made to ensure greater consistency across observers. All instruments were translated into the relevant language and the translations were checked by experts to ensure that meanings were adequately captured. Participants in the evaluation noted that these consultations between U.S. and local researchers, however laborious, were critical in ensuring the success of the study.

*All instruments were translated into the relevant language and the translations were checked by experts*

The study thus called upon university professors, leading professional psychologists, and graduate students to serve as exceptionally well-qualified data collectors, with training conducted by the country research coordinator and a U.S. researcher. Substantial time was spent in classrooms administering the instruments and comparing results across observers. U.S. researchers also worked closely with country research coordinators to set procedures for random selection, quality control, and data management. The evaluation provided a unique opportunity for educators to learn new methods of assessment. The bulk of data collection took place in May 1998, after which data were coded, cleaned, and analyzed. Preliminary results were discussed at a second cross-country research team meeting in November 1998.

#### *Results of the Evaluation: Educational Performance*

An initial concern was whether children in the Step by Step program were learning as well as children in traditional preschool classrooms. The evaluation found that Step by Step children performed as well or better than children in traditional classrooms, especially in mathematics. Researchers hypothesized that Step by Step's emphasis on exploratory learning helps children acquire a greater conceptual understanding of mathematics. There were few differences in creativity between children in traditional and Step by Step classrooms, except for the Unusual Uses activity, at which Step by Step children were significantly more creative. In addition, Step by Step classrooms seemed to provide greater support to children with less well-developed academic skills (Brady et al, 1999c).

### *Democratic Concepts*

The evaluation found that children in Step by Step classrooms use significantly more democratic practices than traditional classrooms. The researchers conclude that Step by Step teachers have undergone substantial shifts in their thinking about and practice of teaching. Step by Step teachers employed classroom practices that “engaged children in choices and decision making around their own learning.” Teachers encouraged children to establish a classroom community; their independence – social and intellectual – was also promoted (Brady et al, 1999b).

### *Teaching Approaches*

Teachers made the shift from “teacher as expert” to “teacher as learner and facilitator”

Teaching practices were also found to differ significantly, with the Step by Step teachers demonstrating greater child-centeredness. Step by Step teachers, for example, consistently encouraged children to explore and question. The researchers concluded that Step by Step teachers made the shift from “teacher as expert” to “teacher as learner and facilitator,” an essential step in moving to a child-centered curriculum. Step by Step kindergartens have rescheduled time, giving teachers planning time and time to learn from each other and from supervisors. Step by Step teachers were thus learning and modeling the values of exploratory learning, and lifelong learning. In addition, teachers have assumed greater responsibility and decision-making role in the operation of their kindergartens (Brady et al, 1999b:). In these ways, the evaluation found that the Step by Step program had significantly improved teachers’ instructional practices.

### *Parental Involvement*

Similarly, Step by Step kindergartens were found to have involved parents and community members to a much greater extent than did traditional classrooms. “What started as primarily a classroom volunteer initiative has evolved into a way of working that values the participation of families and community members (Brady et al, 1999b: 111).” Family and community members both contributed to Step by Step kindergartens and were enriched as well. “Kindergartens — with their access, openness, and shared decision making — have created a climate which influences the many volunteers who cross their thresholds (Brady et al, 1999b: 111),” suggesting a ripple effect.

### *Broader Community Initiatives*

The evaluation found evidence that some Step by Step kindergartens were engaged in a variety of community development efforts. In addition, there was evidence that directors were acquiring entrepreneurial and advocacy skills potentially useful in enhancing their community outreach.

### *Sustainability*

Finally, the evaluation found numerous indications of sustainability: high levels of achievement of Step by Step children; increasing demand from potential clients; the achievement by Step by Step of NGO status in three of the four countries examined; and substantial support from ministries of education and teacher training institutions. Indeed, a number of teacher preparation programs have integrated Step by Step methodology into their coursework and student teachers increasingly are being placed in Step by Step classrooms.

The Step by Step program appears well on its way to making an ongoing institutional contribution to the education systems of the countries in which it works. Researchers attribute the wide involvement of stakeholders and implementers in the decision-making process to the appeal that the Step by Step themes had for key constituencies. This outreach also helped the project avoid many of the problems that plague innovations taken to scale and to maintain high levels of quality and encounter little resistance from key institutions. Ministries, parents, and practitioners alike find resonance in democratic practice, child-centered, participatory methods of instruction, community participation, creative, critical thinking, and exploratory learning.

### *Evaluation of the Orava Project: Goals*

The evaluation was the first of the four evaluations of the Orava project to focus on educational practices and their institutionalization. More specifically, the research team:

- conducted direct classroom observations; collected data from key stakeholders in the Ministry of Education, Comenius University, and the Methods Centers;
- compared program results with similar programs in the region, using EDC's Teaching Skills Inventory; and

*Researchers attribute the wide involvement of stakeholders to the appeal of the Step by Step themes*

- reviewed records and evaluations of training programs in the Orava Association offices (Brady & Spiro, 1999a: 4-5).

*The evaluators focused on program effectiveness, program impact, and sustainability*

Time and resource limitations forced the team to examine only five of the 10 project components, those most closely related to educational practices – teacher in-service training, teacher pre-service training, school/ university partnerships, and educational leadership and early childhood programs.

Evaluators posed eight research questions, in three broad categories:

#### A. Program Effectiveness

1. Has the Orava Project made progress toward reforming the educational system to incorporate democratic practices?
2. What evidence exists that the Orava Project has influenced participants' teaching practices in classrooms?
3. Does the UNI program for Slovakia represent an important adaptation and/or innovation to what is known in the U.S. as best practices?
4. Do the UNI program teaching guides and training materials incorporate the known, best pedagogical approaches?

#### B. Program Impact

5. What evidence is there that the Orava Project results are being disseminated?
6. What evidence is there that the project was able to bring about a well-coordinated effort that is mutually reinforcing?

#### C. Sustainability

7. What changes have been made in Comenius University and other pre-service institutions as a result of UNI's efforts?
8. Is UNI likely to produce continuing and sustainable development impacts after USAID funding has stopped? Through policies of the Ministry of Education? Through the Methods Centers? Through the establishment of an NGO and its current personnel? (Brady, 1999a).

### *Evaluation Process*

To answer these questions, researchers took a qualitative approach. After a review and analysis of key documents, they met with UNI project directors and USAID staff to clarify questions. They identified key respondents and decided on the instrumentation and research processes. During the eight days of site visits, the team traveled to the three regions where the program was being implemented and gathered data from project participants, non-participants, and other key stakeholders through focus groups, interviews, surveys, and classroom observations. The team developed six instruments: interview schedules for university faculty, the Ministry of Education, NGO staff, and Methods Center officials, a school/classroom observation guide, and a participant survey. The team also administered EDC's Teaching Skills Inventory, used widely to collect data on democratic education practices in the region.

### *Results of the Evaluation*

The evaluation suggested that the Orava Project had had positive effects on its (voluntary) participants, but that the impact on the larger population was less clear and institutionalization was weak: The Orava Project has had “a deep impact on the lives and work of participating Slovak teachers, school administrators, and university faculty (Brady & Spiro, 2000: 63).” Consistent leadership and a coherent program design enabled the Project to develop “a community of local educators who are committed to the values and practices inherent in democratic education (Brady & Spiro, 2000: 63).” Achieving this was especially impressive in light of an extremely difficult political context that, until recently, forced the project to abandon its plans of working with the Ministry of Education, or any other government organization.

*“a deep impact on the lives and work of participating Slovak teachers, school administrators, and university faculty”*

Thus, at the individual level, the Orava Project seems to have had an important impact on individuals committed to the project. However, its institutional impact has been more tentative and limited, due in large part to the unfavorable political environment during much of the project life. In addition, the voluntary nature of participation and relative lack of outreach to non-participants has also weakened project impact. Dependence on U.S. co-directors and on external funding has threatened sustainability. The need for a strong organization to continue the project is clear. Finally, dependence on a cascade model of training has endangered the conceptual coherence of the program by watering down the essential principles of the program.

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF IEQ TO THE EVALUATIONS

We have noted that these two evaluations differ from IEQ's usual mode of planning a direct — albeit collaborative and invited — intervention. Instead, IEQ was invited to evaluate interventions initiated and sustained by others. Even so, the IEQ values and assumptions about educational quality and approach to the change process were key elements in the activities and outcomes of the evaluations:

*In both cases, the evaluations looked to classroom instruction as the core of education and quality*

- Instruction must be seen as the heart of quality. In both cases, the evaluations looked first to classroom instruction as the core of education and quality. Here, and in the IEQ program as a whole, improvements in quality must begin in the classroom. The results must be manifest in instruction and in student learning.
- Policy on educational quality is properly generated from, or at least informed by, the classroom. Organizational changes are often necessary in support of improved quality. Traditional change strategies, however, often begin with the external support structure, moving later (and often never quite making it) to the classroom. In both these projects as well as in IEQ's other activities, decisions about the kinds of changes needed in external support structures are guided by information originating from classrooms and local practitioners.
- Careful, appropriate assessment is a critical task in generating useful policy information. In these evaluations, special attention was given to the development and collaborative refinement of data collection instruments, especially in the Step by Step evaluation. This was necessary because host country researchers had little or no experience assessing programs or operationalizing “democratic instructional practices.” As an unintended consequence, the research process served to teach host country researchers, many of whom were influential educators in their own right, new ways of conducting research, evaluating and informing program development, and thinking about the instructional life of schools. True to the IEQ strategy, data, once collected, were taken back to participants for interpretation and elaboration of policy implications.
- Collaboration is not only good practice but good science. The evaluations bore out many of IEQ's tenets: Collaboration allows participants, who possess more information about local conditions than do external researchers, to contribute to the research process. The greater the collaboration permitted by design of the evaluation (and its funding and deadlines), the more complete the picture



generated, the more likely the evaluation will contribute to desired change in the system, and the broader the spin-offs. Collaboration builds ownership; a key to the success of the Step by Step programs was the involvement of actors at all levels of the system — parents and community members, university faculty and national experts, teacher trainers, ministry officials, teachers and kindergarten directors.

- Building capacity is key. Both evaluations involved local researchers in all aspects of the project, creating substantial capacity for future and ongoing research of this kind. In particular, Step by Step took special pains to develop work plans with structured capacity building. Much like collaboration, capacity building strengthens commitment and has a ripple effect, especially among field implementers. It enables the project to take advantage of the insider knowledge of local participants and moves the project toward ongoing sustainability.

In these ways, IEQ would seem to be profoundly democratic in its assumptions and approach to quality improvements.

### *Democratic Evaluation*

If the assumptions behind these projects are valid — that collaborative, bottom-up, inquiry-based relationships are more democratic — the implications for the practice of democratic education extend beyond training teachers for more democratic classrooms. Democratic principles are more effectively “taught” as an integral part of the everyday organization of instruction and of the daily relationship of school to community life than offered abstractly as a separate subject. Just as classroom instruction can teach democratic principles and practices according to how it is organized, so the evaluation of projects and the facilitation of school change can teach a more or less democratic lesson, depending on how activities are organized.

*Evaluation can teach a democratic lesson, depending on how activities are organized*

One way of thinking about democratic evaluation would suggest that it be organized along similar principles to democratic classrooms. Adapting some of the words used earlier, democratic evaluation can prepare organizations to assume active roles improving themselves and contributing to development of a more democratic society. Democratic evaluation might be characterized by:

- **critical thinking skills on the part of the evaluators, the evaluated/program participants, and the consumers of evaluation** (decision makers), moving beyond the simplistic

question, Did it work, or whose fault was it? to (How) did it work? Or what's really going on here? Why? What can be learned from this?

- **an evolved partnership** between the evaluators, program participants, and the consumers of evaluation that increases program participants' choices and responsibility and requires flexibility on part of evaluators and decision makers. Thus: How can we best facilitate desired change? becomes a more relevant question than Did they get it right (or wrong)? Such an evolved partnership would involve participants in defining questions guiding the evaluation as well as in implementing it. Democratic evaluation would involve the broadest possible range of participants, for reasons of both good politics and good science.
- **a focus on inquiry and discovery** – What's going on and why? What important information do different stakeholders have, and how can we create conditions in which they will be interested in (or feel safe) sharing that information? Questions would engage program designers, funders as well as clients and stakeholders in the larger society.
- **new, “authentic” approaches to accountability**, using measures that capture more complex aspects of organizational change and development, that apportion accountability at the appropriate level, i.e., systemically and not individually when the problem is systemic.

*The idea that information from an evaluation might help a leader achieve his or her own goals is an insight indeed*

A more democratic approach to systemic quality improvements would recognize the inherently educational nature of organizational and systemic change. Even in the Step by Step program – with its very progressive assumptions about learning – substantial time was required for administrators to recognize the utility of information provided by an inquiry-oriented evaluation. Raised in an educational environment where evaluation was either punitive – “Gotcha!” – or purely descriptive (for example, reporting the numbers of teachers trained), the idea that information from an evaluation might help a leader achieve his or her own goals is an insight indeed.

#### *Toward More Democratic Evaluation*

The evaluations also provide concrete ideas on more instructive and democratic approaches to organizing evaluation.

- **Involve stakeholders.** As noted, the more involved stakeholders were in both project and evaluation, the more successful the

intervention and the more useful the evaluation. Involving stakeholders substantially involves logistical challenges as well as potential challenges to the authority of evaluators, or those who commission the evaluation. It also involves more time and resources than is necessary to accomplish a traditional evaluation.

- **Allow time** (to develop capacity, build relationships, involve stakeholders, and teach old participants new ways of thinking and acting). Due to cost, most evaluations are carried out quickly. The larger goals of the project may be far better served, however, by a longer time frame – allowing the organization and its most entrenched members to learn. Done properly and democratically, evaluation can be a profound educational and developmental experience for an educational organization. The short time frame of the Orava Project evaluation allowed for relatively little participation, for example; as a result, the Agency got its answer but the organization learned much less from the evaluation than it might have.
- **Identify** (and don't rush) **critical intervention points**. In the case of the Step by Step program, the process of instrument development and refinement appears to have been a critical "learning moment." Refinement of the instruments, pilot testing and adapting them, translation and subsequent refinement, training of data collectors, all appear to have been instrumental in communicating the crucial points not simply of the evaluation and data collection exercise but of the project itself. The carefully-implemented instrument development process provided host country researchers and teachers with concrete examples of the principles of democratic education. Instrument development enabled a number of individuals, many with influence in education and policy circles, to understand and apply the principles of democratic education and, further, to assess the extent to which a classroom is democratic.
- **Translate carefully and apply**. The applied meaning of words such as active learning is difficult to communicate to those experienced in traditional ways of thinking. While a superficial understanding may allow one to use a new technique, a deeper understanding is necessary to make sensible use of the technique.
- **Learn to interpret results carefully**. Decision makers with access to evaluatory information about schools under their supervision may try to use that information to hold individuals accountable in counter-productive ways. In such contexts, it is important to work carefully with the consumers of such information to see that a

*the process of instrument development and refinement appears to have been a critical "learning moment"*

single indicator does little to capture the process of change that is going on.

A strict accountability may do little in the long run to help the organization improve, if the organization lacks the resources, the information on how to improve, and information on its performance to take positive steps. In such cases, the decision maker might do well to think of change as an instructional process and to think of the principles of democratic education as the principles for improving, in this case, school quality.

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# Continuing the Cycle

*When we cast our bread upon the waters, we  
can presume that someone downstream  
whose face we will never know will benefit  
from our action, as we who are downstream  
from another will profit from that grantor's gift.<sup>1</sup>*

IEQ has pioneered a change process for those dedicated to reform that makes a difference in the quality of learning. This process has the power to strengthen a system, as illustrated by the evidence used as a basis for action presented in each chapter of this volume. Throughout the past decade, the IEQ educators and researchers in 20 countries have gathered and applied a concrete body of knowledge about the process and outcomes of the learning experience on behalf of their national reform initiatives. These efforts have knit together individuals from institutions whose profession is to generate and transmit knowledge based on research, with the wisdom and experience of individuals such as parents, community members, teachers and citizens committed to providing learning opportunities throughout a society.

The IEQ cycle has guided us to meet learners in their world – to open our eyes and ears, to watch and to listen, and to come away with a new understanding of how to improve that which was seen and heard. It brought us closer to where we will be as a society and as a world, based on how we respond to the experience of our young learners in their world. The process applied by IEQ is an effort to answer the question of “meaning” to that experience of learning – by naming what happens in that environment as a steppingstone to improvement. This volume is a record of what it meant to the IEQ teams and how they used what they learned to take actions such as: making the learning situation a more productive and successful experience; improving the knowledge & skills of the teachers; engaging parents and other community members in supporting the learning; sharing the knowledge gained with all people

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<sup>1</sup> Maya Angelou in “Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now.”

committed to improving teaching and learning; and sharing methods for continuing to integrate the cycle into national reform enterprises.

Since IEQ began its work, education and national development have grown in prominence and importance. The status of a nation and its ability to participate in a global society are linked to individuals' knowledge, the versatility of their skills, and their ability to access and use information through a variety of channels. Since September 11, 2001, the meaning of education and learning and the dispersal of knowledge are viewed through a broader lens. There is a renewed international discussion about the importance of education and its inexorable link to national development.

Gathering and using knowledge to promote positive change is a challenging task. The numerous and increasingly available communication pipelines facilitate opportunities to both: use erroneous information and misuse valid information. All disciplines face the daunting challenge and responsibility of obtaining, sifting, and applying valid and reliable information to stimulate change – and from the IEQ perspective, change that fosters policy and practice that results in improved learning performance. IEQ has introduced a process – the cycle of improving teaching and learning – applied in 20 countries during the past decade. It is a process that links knowledge from the classroom and community to the national system of education. It is an ongoing quest because the goal of education quality will always be a goal and an education system must always possess the capacity to measure where it is in relation to where it wishes to be. The classroom is the inner self of the education system and knowledge of that self is critical before investments are made to strengthen it and to continue to move forward. The IEQ cycle offers guideposts along a pathway of exploration, not in abstract terms, but on the ground within the context of national concerns, to gain new knowledge and understanding inside the classrooms where learning takes place, and to move that knowledge to new heights.

The IEQ cycle for improving teaching and learning marked a turning point in the dialogue on education quality by focusing the information obtained and analyzed on the classroom and by broadening the discussion to include teachers, parents, and the wider civil society.



The IEQ cycle continues – in a form that most appropriately serves education reform in these and other nations.

*February 2002*

# Acknowledgments

Since 1991, when the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project became a reality, the colleagues in national institutions, USAID Bureaus and Missions, IEQ consortium members, and international technical consultants who have directly participated in the design, implementation and outreach activities in the 20 countries number in the hundreds. Others, such as local educators, parents, community members, NGOs, stakeholders, other donor partners, and of course, the young people, whose lives have been touched as a consequence of IEQ, number much higher. Any attempt to name individuals will almost certainly and unintentionally, result in an omission. We have undertaken this journey together. One of the most enduring and gratifying experiences of this journey is what we have learned from one another. Everyone brought some knowledge, some skill, or some experience that strengthened the wisdom and capability of another.

**Host Country Colleagues.** Thanks to the Coordinators and Team Members who offered their technical skills, knowledge of their national needs and cultural concerns, long, long hours of commitment to their work, and warm hospitality to our frequent visits. They are the change agents who will continue to apply the cycle of improvement after the contract draws to a close.

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Special thanks to Kent Ashworth, our newest IEQ colleague, for his commitment, persistence, and patience in supporting all the authors to produce this volume.

The IEQ Family Tree appears on the inside of the back cover of this volume. A Directory of IEQ Participants lists all the individuals who have contributed to IEQ since 1991. The Catalogue of IEQ Products and Publications lists materials and documents produced under IEQ. The IEQ website (*www.IEQ.org*) showcases the wide net of the activity.

Our hearts have been gladdened by our time together: our minds have been challenged by our conversations – when we agree and when we disagree; our lives have been enriched through our work and our play – our laughter and our tears.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jane G. Schubert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jane" being more prominent and the last name "Schubert" following in a similar style.

**Jane G. Schubert**  
Director  
Improving Educational Quality (IEQII) Project